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## THESIS

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOVIET  
MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

by

Kimberly Douglas Viner

December 1984

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concerning the threat posed by the Soviet military presence to both regional states and the United States. The likelihood of a long term Soviet military presence in Indochina is explored in relation to U.S. and regional security. The current United States response to the threat is detailed and a future course of action is suggested.

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Implications of the Soviet  
Military Presence in Southeast Asia

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
December 1984

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the implications of the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia. It shows the inadequacy of Soviet attempts to build influence in the region through use of non military means and subsequent Soviet reliance on military assistance programs and military deployments to gain influence. The reaction by regional nations and the United States to the military presence is described. Conclusions are reached concerning the threat posed by the Soviet military presence to both regional states and the United States. The likelihood of a long term Soviet military presence in Indochina is explored in relation to U.S. and regional security. The current United States response to the threat is detailed and a future course of action is suggested.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine the implications of the Soviet military activities in Southeast Asia. It demonstrates the inadequacy of the USSR's non-military means of gaining influence;<sup>1</sup> describes the Soviet military buildup and military assistance programs in the area; shows the reaction to the growth of the Soviet regional presence by the states in the area; measures the impact on the United States position in Southeast Asia; and explains the implications of the Soviet reliance on military power as tool of foreign policy.

The Soviets encounter many problems when they attempt to gain regional influence. If they wish to be successful in furthering their national interests these problems must be solved. Mohmed Heikal, from his view point after many years of first hand dealings with the USSR from a third world point of view, identifies four problems the Soviets face in dealing with smaller nations [Ref. 2: p. 278]. First, the Soviets are generally unable to fully comprehend the nature of the nationalist movements in those states. Rather than recognizing nationalism as a very powerful force which will inevitably run its own course, they tend to see it as a means by which the proletariat can advance the cause of the

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed examination of the process of influence building see Ref. 1.

socialist revolution, denying any other possible outcomes (i.e. nationalist movements resulting in stable capitalist democracies).

Second, the Soviets are largely unable to cope with their own dichotomous nature as a leader of world revolution on the one hand and a status quo conscious super power on the other. Conflict is welcomed where it weakens the hand of the West and presents opportunities for Soviet advances. Moscow criticizes departures from preferred norms. For example, it is one thing for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) to further the case of the socialist revolution in Kampuchea and quite another for it to deviate from the Soviet economic model.

A third basic problem the Soviets face when they attempt to gain influence in other nations is the rigidity of Soviet institutions. This creates an inability to pursue alternate avenues when the initial movement is curtailed or blocked by unforeseen problems. Heikal says that in most third world countries there is a strong leader who can manage to push programs forward in spite of bureaucratic problems. In dealing with the USSR this is not the case, and the third world leaders give up on the "creaking bureaucracy" of the Soviets.



Finally, the Soviet leadership tends to reflect the rigidity of the overall Soviet system, causing leaders of smaller nations to complain of an "impression of frozen immobility" in Soviet ability to deal with current problems on anything other than their own terms. In short, because of the longevity of Soviet foreign policy functionaries such as Gromyko and Brezhnev, the third world leader can never hope for a better deal after the next Soviet "election". He must deal with the same personalities for seemingly endless periods of time.

Thus, before they get started, the Soviets have a disadvantageous load of baggage which they carry into the international arena where they want to achieve their national interest through influence building. These disadvantages, along with problems specific to Southeast Asia listed later, affect Soviet attempts to gain regional influence. They also partially explain why the Soviets rely so much on military means to reach their goals.

The remainder of this thesis examines the implications of Soviet regional military activity in five chapters. The first looks at Soviet foreign policy goals in the region and the means of attaining those goals. The second list the present and future capabilities of the Soviet military in the region. The third is an overview of the perceptions of

regional actors towards Soviet activities in the area. The fourth assesses implications for the U.S. of Soviet activity in Southeast Asia. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the body of the thesis concerning Soviet regional successes and failures and the long range implications for the United States.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For a detailed framework for the examination of Soviet foreign policy see Ref. 3.

## II. THE SOVIET UNION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Prior to 1978 Soviet power and influence in Southeast Asia were not very strong. Only since 1978 have the Soviets found themselves in a position in Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup> where they are able to consider serious actions to move toward the attainment of regional and related global goals. A push by the Soviets to increase power and build influence began late that year with a Soviet naval buildup in the theater. The buildup provided moral backing to the Vietnamese who were at war with the Chinese. This short war between two former allies who had throughout the Vietnam war been described by the old Chinese adage as "close as the lips to the teeth", opened the door for a larger Soviet presence which will be detailed in depth below [Ref. 9: p. 63.].

### A. SOVIET GOALS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In the traditional ideological sense, the ultimate goal of the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia is to advance the cause of world communism through revolution. Indeed,

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this thesis the term Southeast Asia denotes the ASEAN states and Indochina.

Though the need for some degree of cooperation is admitted, the Kremlin still exudes bellicosity and invective when referring to capitalism. The basic legitimacy of non-Communist regimes is still not accepted. In the Soviet view, no 'capitalist government' has a moral right to exist. Ultimately, they will all be replaced by regimes truly representing the 'working people' [Ref. 16: p. 116].

But, ideology is clearly not the overriding factor in Soviet relations with Southeast Asia. This is true even though Moscow continually espouses the victory of Marxist-Leninist theories in the international system (which change according to the needs of the current group in power in the Kremlin). The leaders of the Soviet Union are more pragmatic, dealing in foreign policy much like other great powers, focusing on the national interests of the Soviet Union in relation to power, security, prestige, and the USSR's relation to the United States and China [Ref. 16: p. 124.].

To pursue their national interests, the Soviet Union has four main goals in Southeast Asia. These are: 1. Containing of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) economically, ideologically, and militarily. 2. Countering U.S. influence in the area, especially to weaken American power and separate the United States from friendly countries in the region to shift the global balance of power toward the Soviet Union. 3. Keeping the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, currently made up of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, and Brunei) from becoming overtly pro-Western with security arrangements with the U.S. or the PRC. 4. Supporting the pro-Soviet states in the region and increasing their dependence on the USSR [Ref. 19: p. 154.].



Are the Soviets able to build influence and attain their goals through the use of diplomacy, economic interaction and military presence? Yes and no.

## B. THE CURRENT POSITION OF THE SOVIET UNION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

After 1978, the USSR showed a greater interest in Southeast Asia. They sensed that following the U.S. departure from the area they would be able to gain much more influence there. Beginning with the summer of 1978, a marked change in Moscow's attitude toward Southeast Asia in general and ASEAN in particular occurred. Moscow Radio and the Soviet press took favorable positions towards ASEAN and stressed the lasting nature of the continuing conflicts between ASEAN states and Beijing [Ref. 25: pp 65-66]. The Soviets were attempting to show respect for ASEAN by stating that they were not the source of support for Southeast Asian communist insurgency movements by placing the blame on the PRC.

The USSR also took steps in mid-1978 to solidify its relations with the SRV, granting it full membership in the Soviet-bloc economic group, COMECON. In November of that year, the USSR and the SRV concluded a treaty of friendship and cooperation. The USSR hoped that this 25 year treaty would further signal to the nations of Southeast Asia its commitment to diplomatic dealings in the area and serve as an

indicator of Moscow's opposition to Beijing's diplomatic efforts in Kampuchea [Ref. 26: p. 112.]. This series of diplomatic offensives suffered a blow later in 1978 when the SRV invaded Kampuchea. The USSR was in the position of supporting a regional aggressor, one that frightened the members of ASEAN as much as the PRC.

The Soviets are cross-pressured in Southeast Asia. On the one hand their relation with Vietnam has given them a major client with the strongest military capabilities in the region whose strategic location provides access to unprecedented regional naval and air facilities for a growing Soviet Pacific Fleet. On the other hand, Moscow's economic underwriting of Hanoi's occupation of Cambodia obstructs Soviet efforts to establish cordial ties with the ASEAN states and serves to enhance the orientation of the latter toward the U.S. and China [Ref. 27: p. 304.].

There has been little improvement in Soviet relations with the nations of Southeast Asia since the invasion. Moscow's attitude toward ASEAN remains basically friendly and Soviet authors such as I.I. Kovalenko, a noted writer on Asian affairs, emphasize the strategic importance of the region [Ref. 25: p. 55]. The continuing Soviet support for the SRV presence in Kampuchea, however, has not let the relationship between the USSR and ASEAN prosper.

Also, Moscow's signals to the area are mixed. For example, in 1983, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapista, commenting on the alleged Thai support to Kampuchean resistance forces, said that Vietnam would begin supplying

arms to insurgents in Thailand and other ASEAN states if they did not cease their support of the Kampuchean resistance forces [Ref 28: p. 318]. At the same time, the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi released a statement declaring that the USSR wanted relations between the SRV and ASEAN to improve [Ref 29: p. 18]. The Southeast Asians are distrustful of this doublespeak approach and the Soviet position in Southeast Asia, excluding Indochina, continues to be weak.

#### C. THE INADEQUACY OF SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO BUILD INFLUENCE

In an effort to build influence and achieve their goals in Southeast Asia, the Soviets pursue four steps. First, they claim that their political/ideological and economic system is the best road for regional development. Second they supply aid and military assistance. Third they sign military alliances with various states in Southeast Asia. Fourth, they maintain a seemingly permanent military deployment in Indochina. A brief examination of the two major areas of involvement prior to 1978, Indonesia and Vietnam, indicates that their present efforts in these areas are based on an uncertain background.

##### 1. Past Inadequacies

Soviet efforts at gaining a foothold in Southeast Asia through involvement in Indonesia shows that concentrated

efforts may not pay off in the long term. Soviet-Indonesian relations were cordial from 1954-1965 as the Soviets identified with the anticolonial and anti-imperialist strains in President Sukarno's foreign policy. Indeed, the Soviets gave over one billion dollars worth of military aid to the Indonesians in the early 1960's. This aid was responsible for a large scale upgrade of the Indonesian armed forces. Equipment provided included major surface and patrol combatants, medium range bombers and fighters, and large amounts of weapons for ground forces [Ref. 10: pp. 415-427]. The USSR hoped this aid would build lasting ties between the Indonesian and Soviet military leadership. However, potential Soviet gains were never fully realized because of suspected communist involvement in the abortive left wing coup of September 30, 1965 [Ref. 10: pp. 271-275].

Whether or not the Soviets were responsible for the coup in Indonesia, one of the consequences was that large scale military assistance was stopped. Even if the Soviets were not involved in the coup, and they probably were not, the newly powerful right wing of the Indonesian military felt they were guilty by association. The military saw all communists as revolutionaries, and therefore evil. At the same time Soviet leadership which came to power after the fall of Krushchev concluded that the massive amounts of aid to Indonesia reaped no benefits. After all, the Indonesian military killed hundreds of thousands of suspected communists after the coup



attempt; hardly the act of a grateful nation! The feeling of Indonesian suspicion and Soviet disappointment over lack of gain for their efforts joined to ruin the relationship. Since that time, relations between the nations have been correct but less than enthusiastic.

The other example of Soviet involvement in Southeast Asia prior to 1978 was in Vietnam. Extensive documentation shows that the Soviet Union was (along with the PRC) one of the two main suppliers of military and economic aid to North Vietnam in its war against South Vietnam. Were it not for Soviet aid, especially after the curtailment of aid from the PRC late in the war, the North would not have been able to mount a large scale conventional invasion of South Vietnam in the spring of 1975. The Soviet Union was obviously heavily involved in the Vietnam conflict. In the pre-1969 era (before the announcement of the Nixon doctrine) the main goal of the USSR in Southeast Asia was to see the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the area. The USSR hoped that aid to the North Vietnamese would allow more opportunity for an increase in Soviet influence in the region and hurt the U.S. at the same time [Ref. 11: p. 337].

An examination of Soviet activity in the SRV in 1975 indicates that the effort was not paying off. There were no formal economic ties; Soviet Navy units made no port visits to the SRV; there was no formal treaty of cooperation between

the two nations; and there were indications that the SRV wanted and would get a normalization of relations with the U.S. (in hope of economic aid).

What had happened along the way to short circuit these Soviet efforts? The fact is that prior to late 1978 the Soviets were not anxious to see a strong, unified Vietnam which could displace it as the important regional socialist actor. Also, the Vietnamese were skeptical of the depth of Soviet commitment to their nation. Three examples chosen after 1964 serve to show why this is true. First, in 1964 and again in 1965, Krushchev and Kosygin each proposed a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Indochina. Furthermore, Kosygin went so far as to pressure the North Vietnamese to accept President Johnson's precondition that the North cease supplying military aid to the guerillas in the South. After initial approval of the Moscow initiative, the North disavowed the Soviet diplomatic move [Ref. 11: pp. 336-337].

Second, the Soviets never regarded the war in Vietnam and U.S. bombing of the North (even when Kosygin was in Hanoi) as fatal to the process of detente. Rather, they welcomed President Nixon to Moscow in spite of the fact that he was Hanoi's number one enemy, and as far as possible (in light of PRC efforts to increase its influence in the North) pressured the leaders of the North to toe the line of detente [Ref 11: p. 337].

## 2. Present Inadequacies

The situation prior to 1978 shows that the USSR did not gain a great deal of influence in Indonesia and North Vietnam, despite its efforts in the political, economic and military arenas. Since 1978 the USSR has not had much success in the region outside of Indochina. The USSR has failed to impress any of the members of ASEAN that it is best example of social development or that it has the potential to be a strong ally. In fact it has often done itself tremendous harm in the way it acted and conducted business. The Leninist ideology has little appeal because these nations have already experienced their national revolutions and established long lasting, viable polities which do not need to turn to the USSR for social guidance or economic aid.

With the exception of the very large role that it plays in the SRV, Laos and Kampuchea, the amount of trade conducted between Southeast Asian nations and the USSR is minuscule. Imports of Soviet goods amount to only a fraction of total imports by ASEAN nations and have not exceeded .5% within the past decade while exports to the USSR have not exceeded 4% (at the same time the average for ASEAN countries with the United States for 1979 was 18.6% for exports and 16.5% for imports [Ref. 21: p. 24]). On the other hand, the figures for trade between Vietnam and the USSR have run approximately 40% in

exports and imports [Ref. 20: p. 206]. In short, it doesn't seem that the technocrats who actually determine economic policy in the ASEAN countries have found much to draw them to the Soviet Union.

At the same time, the political leaders of these countries are continually reminded of the heavy handed manner in which the Soviet political system works. This acts as a repellent against Soviet influence. The actions the Soviets took in Afghanistan and the KAL 007 shoot down and, most importantly, their support for the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, are among only the most internationally visible incidents which tarnish the Russian image. As an example of how these actions harm Soviet standings in the area, one only has to look at Singapore, the smallest country in the region. In 1980 it terminated an agreement with the USSR to repair Soviet naval units at Singaporean shipyards because of the invasions of Kampuchea and Afghanistan [Ref. 22: p. 137]. (This did not create a hardship on Singapore as the Soviet portion of all ship repairs in 1978, for example, were less than 10% [Ref.23: p. 539]). In short, the members of ASEAN have found little to attract them to the Soviet Union.

This lack of attraction would appear to be true in Southeast Asia only as far as the ASEAN is concerned. On the surface, the economic and diplomatic relations between the Soviets and the countries of Indochina would seem to be good.

Indeed, Soviet economic aid to the SRV is currently running at approximately 700 million dollars a year with another 200 million going to Laos and Kampuchea. There are also approximately 7,000 economic advisors in place in Indochina [Ref. 32: p. 6]. Indochinese economic dependence on the Soviets is nearly total.

This is only the most superficial view of the real relationship between Indochina and the USSR. The true picture is not so bright. There are instances where the Vietnamese have chafed under both the economic dominance and political arrogance of the Soviets. The Soviets publicly criticize the Vietnamese for their poor economic acumen and bureaucratic corruption. This displeases the Vietnamese. In fact, the situation in Vietnam is so bad that visitors to that country have been frequently insulted (and even murdered) when they have been mistaken for Russians [Ref. 13: p. 257]. Furthermore, the tenuous base of the diplomatic relations between the two countries was exposed when Hanoi engineered the downfall of Kampuchean leader Pen Sovan in 1981 because he adhered too closely to the desires of the Soviet Union [Ref. 32: p. 6].

Another area where the SRV and their Soviet benefactors have not seen eye to eye is in the manner in which the SRV has handled the military operations in Kampuchea. The Soviets have not been reluctant to criticize the SRV for

their failure to gain control of the Kampuchean countryside following the 1978 invasion [Ref. 57: p. 40]. Finally, there is a faction within the SRV ruling communist party which criticizes the amount of political dependence the USSR has tried to impose on the SRV as a result of growing economic and military dependence [Ref. 11: p. 347].

At the same time, the Soviets are widely disliked on a personal level throughout the region. The best summation of this dislike in both countries as advanced as Singapore and as backward (economically) as Laos, is offered by Seweryn Bialer.

Soviet cultural patterns are highly formalized, rigid, stolid, intolerant, and strange to an amazing variety of people of various classes and nations who are exposed to them. The Soviet style of life was said maliciously by one foreign leader to combine 'the charm and lightness of the Germans, the openness of the Albanians, the humility of the Indians, and the efficiency of the Latins.' Far from being the carrier of a culture which would enhance any attempts to gain influence, the Soviet people, including the elite, exhibit in their unofficial behavior tremendous attraction to the American style and Western culture. This ambivalence gives to Soviet cultural behavior a poorly concealed feeling of superiority in relations with the poor and 'backward' and a feeling of inferiority in their relations with the rich and 'developed', that is, the Western. Neither is attractive, and neither serves their foreign policy [Ref. 24: p. 260].

The Soviet image is economically, diplomatically and culturally inadequate throughout the region. The conclusion is that the only really usable tool for the Soviets to gain regional influence is that of military assistance for its allies and the projection of its own military power into



Southeast Asia. The one area the Soviets can point to where they have competed successfully with the West is in that of military might. No one can deny Soviet strategic parity with the West. Additionally, Soviet arms and military assistance (even if provided via Cuba) were successful in a number of third world conflicts such as Angola, Ethiopia, etc. within the last decade. These facts must be taken into consideration by both communist and non-communist governments throughout Southeast Asia. In fact, Soviet military assistance to Indochina, approximately one billion dollars a year [Ref. 32: p. 4], allows the Vietnamese to continue their activities in Kampuchea as well as guard against Chinese adventurism and maintain a sizeable force in Laos.

The picture which emerges is one of imbalance of Soviet policy resources, with military resources as the chief asset and all other resources playing at most a supportive role [Ref. 24: p. 256].

It is easy to see why the Soviets must rely on military assets to build influence and achieve their goals in Southeast Asia. They simply do not have the diplomatic and economic "kit bag" to allow any significant, lasting inroads in the area. Rather, they fall back to the more comfortable position of military assistance and deployment of Soviet armed forces to compensate for their political and economic inadequacy [Ref. 31: p. 76]. The role of the Soviet military and military assistance in Southeast Asia is to build influence to achieve regional and global goals. A close

look at this role reveals the Soviet military is important in influence building and goals attainment. Whether or not these efforts will lead to lasting regional influence and goal achievement is open to question.

### III. PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLE OF THE SOVIET MILITARY

In sum, the Soviets have not been very successful politically in East Asia, having shown little flexibility towards China, Japan or ASEAN. They are trying to compensate for their political failure with a military buildup that is proceeding continuously. They are building up and modernizing their navy and ground forces steadily [Ref. 31: p. 76].

We have seen why the Soviet Union is relying primarily on military assets to build influence and achieve their four basic goals in Southeast Asia. A brief examination of Soviet military assistance and ground forces presence will be followed by a closer look at the main military instrument for achieving Soviet foreign policy goals in Southeast Asia; the Soviet Navy.

#### A. MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND GROUND FORCES

The total amount of Soviet military aid to Indochina runs to nearly a billion dollars a year, with the majority going to the SRV. This continues a pattern established as early as 1955 when the USSR gave approximately 300 million dollars in military aid to North Vietnam. The figures remained between

300-500 million yearly until 1975. By 1978 the amount had greatly increase and, while hard to quantify exactly, has reportedly doubled. Additionally, the USSR also gives approximately 100 million dollars a year to Laos and Kampuchea [Ref. 32: p. 4].

Money and arms are not the only things that the Soviets send to Indochina. The USSR constructed facilities in the SRV to allow intelligence collection from ground sites most likely targeted at the southern PRC and U.S. bases in the Philippines. Additionally, best estimates are that the USSR has approximately 7,000 ground forces in the SRV, 800 in Kampuchea, and 500 in Laos. These are all probably acting as advisors to the military forces of those countries [Ref. 33: p. 18]. In fact, a Vietnamese army officer captured by the Thais in 1982 reported that there were Soviet military and political advisors in all Vietnamese battalions [Ref. 34: p. 16]. Thai sources [Ref. 35: p. J3] claim that these advisors train communists insurgents in Laos for operations in Thailand. Finally, high level Soviet military delegations frequently travel to Indochina to show solidarity with their client states [Ref. 36].

In short, military assistance and advisors are important to strengthening the Soviet position in Indochina. The Soviet assistance to the Indochinese helps the USSR strengthen its military position in Southeast Asia. It can be argued that

the military assistance given to the SRV has been used as the necessary carrot to allow the Soviets to establish their increased naval presence in the SRV. This presence for the first time directly enhances the strategic position of the USSR in Southeast Asia by challenging U.S. control of the South China Sea and its approaches.

In the same vein, these attempts at influence building directly aid the attainment of three of the four basic Soviet foreign policy goals in the region. First, the aid and advisors build up the strength of the Indochinese military forces allowing them to resist Chinese attempts to reach military solutions to problems such as border disputes. Second, the aid and advisors also made the SRV invasion of Kampuchea possible. This stopped efforts by the U.S. to enhance its influence in Indochina through normalization of relations with the SRV. Third, it has made the Indochinese dependent on the Soviets as their only reliable source of military hardware.

The goal that is not clearly furthered by these two forms of military involvement in Indochina is the attempt to prevent closer ASEAN (or member states) alignment with the West. In fact, most ASEAN nations maintain direct security links with Western nations through the Manila Pact (1954 pact against communist aggression signed by the U.S., U.K., France, Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, and

Pakistan) or the Five Power Defense Arrangements (1971 agreements to formalized U.K. Australian and New Zealand participation in the defense of Malaysia and Singapore).

The Soviet military response in Southeast Asia is unlike other regions where the Soviet military has become so important (such as Eastern Europe or Afghanistan), necessitating a departure from the traditional Soviet dependence on ground forces to match the strength of their potential rivals. The physical distance from the Soviet Union, the lack of any common borders, and the fact that the Vietnamese army already has more than a million regulars, have dictated that the preponderance of Soviet military involvement in the region be naval. This would be true in times of peace and times of war. As Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union, Sergei Gorshkov has said,

The seas belong to no one, and therefore navies do not encounter in their operations many of the restrictions that, in peacetime, hinder the use of other branches of the armed forces in pursuit of political goals.

In present day conditions, navies have acquired a special importance in the respect as a result of the growth of their striking power. The mobility of a navy, and its flexibility when limited military conflicts are imminent, enable it to exert and influence on littoral countries, and to apply and advertise a military threat at any level, beginning with a demonstration of military force and ending with an amphibious landing [Ref. 17: p. 302].

## B. THE SOVIET NAVY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Although Admiral Gorshkov makes a strong argument (especially in the eyes of another naval officer) about the importance of the role of the navy in peacetime and conflict, the role of the navy in Soviet history has not always been as prominent as it is today. In fact there have been occasions when the Soviet Navy has fallen on hard times. It has only been the long term development of the Soviet Navy which has allowed it to come to the fore in Southeast Asia. Twenty years ago the Soviet Navy, by its very nature, could not have been a major tool of Soviet foreign policy in Southeast Asia.

The Soviet Navy has developed rapidly into a force that now poses a significant threat in Southeast Asia.<sup>1</sup> It is capable of conducting operations which are advantageous to the USSR at great distances away from the homeland. The new roles of the navy include an emphasis on anti-submarine warfare (with the intention of protecting Soviet SSBNs from American attack submarines), expanded sea denial, and a guaranteed second strike capability in the form of a large number of SSBNs. All three of these roles pose major threats to U. S. Pacific Fleet (USPACFLT) units. Perhaps the most noteworthy is the emphasis on creating a "no man's sea"

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<sup>1</sup>See Refs 37 and 38 for the development of the Soviet Navy.



great distances from the homeland where neither side would be in control of the sea. It is in this area that the greatly expanded SOVPACFLT would begin to challenge the U.S. in Southeast Asia in the late 1970's.

In pursuit of Soviet foreign policy goals in Southeast Asia, the peacetime roles of the Soviet Navy are: strategic and local deterrence; preparation for war; and the protection and promotion of Soviet overseas peacetime interents. The war fighting roles are: strategic nuclear strike; destruction of enemy naval forces; control of the seas (in areas of Soviet national interest); interdiction of enemy sea lines of communication; amphibious warfare; and at-sea replenishment of naval forces [Ref. 39: p. 70].

These roles are amply demonstrated by SOVPACFLT through its SSBN patrols in the Sea of Okhotsk and the Northern Pacific, a continued buildup in force structure, and forward deployment and port visits of SOVPACFLT forces throughout the Pacific theater. With the exception of strategic nuclear strike and deterrence, the peacetime and warfighting roles of the Soviet Navy are closely related to attempts to build influence and the overall goals of the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia. Realizing that the Soviet Navy is the primary threat to U.S. (and regional security) in Southeast Asia, it is necessary to examine in depth the recent buildup of Soviet naval forces in the area.

## C. THE SOVIET NAVAL BUILDUP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The rapid expansion and capabilities of SOVPACFLT, headquartered at Vladivostok, allows the USSR to greatly increase its naval strength in Southeast Asia. A tremendous growth pattern is evident in SOVPACFLT over the past fifteen years which results in the capability for SOVPACFLT to keep a sizeable number of units in Southeast Asia. This buildup is shown below.

TABLE 1

SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET FORCE LEVELS  
(This table is compiled from Refs 39, 40, and 41.)

	1968	1973	1978	1983
Submarines*	100	101	113	122
Major Surface Combatants**	58	58	67	88
Minor Surface Combatants	NA	135	113	175
Amphibious Ships***	NA	18	18	22
Mine Warfare Craft	NA	NA	110	100
Auxiliary/Support Ships****	NA	NA	225	215
Aircraft*****	NA	NA	355	425

NA = Not Available

\* Includes all submarines.

\*\* Includes cruisers, destroyers, and frigates.

\*\*\* Includes medium and tank landing ships only.

\*\*\*\* Includes a wide variety of ships.

\*\*\*\*\* Includes strike bombers, tactical support, antisubmarine, and transport and training aircraft. Especially important are the approximately 40 Naval Backfire aircraft equipped with air-to-surface missiles.

Even though this buildup began in the late sixties, it was not until the Chinese invasion of the SRV in early 1979 that SOVPACFLT established a permanent presence in Southeast Asia. The combination of the increasing size of SOVPACFLT and the opportunity for the Soviets to support the Vietnamese against the PRC, provided the perfect chance for starting a permanent Soviet naval presence in Southeast Asia. That permanent presence was presaged by large scale support for the SRV during the 1978 Chinese invasion. A task force of approximately 30 ships was assembled in the South China Sea, extensive reconnaissance flights were flown from SRV airfields by Bear D aircraft, an extensive air and sea lift of military supplies for the SRV was conducted, and SOVPACFLT units made port visits to major SRV ports, increasing the risk to the Chinese if they had decided to bomb those ports [Ref, 22: pp. 138-140].

Unfortunately for the United States, this came after the U.S. debacle in Vietnam had eroded ASEAN confidence in the ability of America to support its allies in the area and was followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which led some observers to further question the ability of the United States to counter potential Soviet expansionism [Ref. 27: p. 307].

In 1979, SOVPACFLT began to operate out of the ex-U.S. naval facilities at Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City as well as Haiphong. In fact, 1979 marked the first time since Vietnamese independence from the French that the Soviet Navy had used or visited Vietnamese ports. In 1979 a total of 79 SOVPACFLT unit visits were conducted resulting in a total of 731 days spent in port, rising rapidly in 1980 to 143 visits ofr 2135 days, including the first visit of a Soviet aircraft carrier (Minsk) [Ref. 22: p. 210-211]. As will be seen, the level of usage continues to increase and other significant developments have taken place.

Although unconfirmed by U.S. intelligence sources, in early 1982 the Secretary General of the National Security Council of Thailand, Squadron Leader Prason Sunsri, announced that the Soviet Union had begun construction on a deep water port at the Kampuchean naval facility at Ream (the same facility destroyed by the U.S. Navy during the Mayaguez incident) early in the year [Ref. 42: p. 24]. This would, of course, allow the Soviets to end complete reliance on the SRV for permanent naval facilities on the South China sea.

Even more ominous for the United States, was the late 1983 announcement by the Commander-in-Chief of United States Forces Pacific, Admiral William Crowe, that TU-16 Badger aircraft were operating from the airfield at Cam Ranh Bay. Additionally, he revealed that approximately 22 Soviet warships were using Cam Ranh on a daily basis reflecting a threefold increase since 1980 (resulting in 8030 ship days for Cam Ranh Bay alone). In total then the current force in the Cam Ranh area would look like this:

TABLE 2

## SOVIET NAVAL FORCES IN THE SRV

This table is compiled using  
information from Refs 43 and 44.

Submarines \$	2-4
Surface combatants *	4-6
Support Ships +	10-12
TU-95/142 #	Probably 4-6
TU-16 %	10

\$ Includes at least one submarine equipped with surface-to surface missiles, most likely an E-II.

\* While the exact make up of the types of ships comprising this group has not been revealed, it is known that Kiev CVHG Minsk as well as other first line SOVPACFLT combatants have called at Cam Ranh Bay and it must be assumed that the complement will reflect the overall make-up of SOVPACFLT including anti-submarine warfare, anti-carrier warfare and amphibious warfare capable units.

+ No further information is available but one would assume at the very least a submarine tender and replenishment ships would be included.

# The exact numbers of Bear aircraft (D models for reconnaissance and intelligence collection and F models for anti-submarine warfare and ocean surveillance) has not been indicated, but standard Soviet practice is to deploy these units in pairs (i.e. two TU-95's and two TU-142's).

% The number of TU-16's constitutes one half of a standard Badger regiment [Ref. 45: p. 437] and is known to include reconnaissance and strike aircraft, the latter capable of carrying air-to-surface missiles and probably tanker aircraft.

#### D. MILITARY IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT FORCE STRUCTURE

SOVPACFLT has established a force on the South China Sea littoral which represents a capability to conduct several types of warfare and carry out the peacetime and wartime roles of the Soviet Navy listed earlier. The use of Soviet Navy units during the Sino-Vietnamese border war of 1978 should show that the Chinese must take the continuous Soviet naval presence in the SRV seriously. That force, strengthened since 1978, can rapidly be brought to bear against southern China in the event of any further Sino-Vietnamese conflicts or in the event of a Sino-Soviet confrontation elsewhere. Additionally, the Soviet Navy units operating in the South China Sea are a direct threat to Chinese South Fleet units which conduct routine operations in the same waters. Finally, if the PRC were to take an aggressive stance against any ASEAN country, (or was perceived to be taking such a stance) it is possible that the target country could turn to the USSR and its fleet for protection.

Also, only since 1978 have the Soviets been able to deploy surface, subsurface and air assets for long periods of time to the South China Sea to counter U.S. military power in the region. (See Chapter V, Section C. for details.) In direct correlation to attainment of goals, SOVPACFLT



forces in Southeast Asia are positioned to quickly strike the southern portion of the PRC if a conflict with the Chinese should occur; they are directly opposite the U.S. bases in the Phillipines and sit nearly astride U.S. lines of communication and supply to the Indian Ocean; they could be easily employed against any member of ASEAN if any of those states joined the PRC in a move against Indochina; and finally, they can be used to support the Soviet client states in Indochina if they are been threatened by the PRC.

Recent actions by the USSR in Southeast Asia indicate that SOVPACFLT will continue to be the focal point of Soviet attempts to attain their regional foreign policy goals well into the future. We next turn to what the future composition of Soviet military forces may be in Southeast Asia.

#### E. FUTURE COMPOSITION OF SOVIET FORCES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

It appears that the level of Soviet military assistance and ground forces advisors to the SRV will be maintained at its current levels in the near future. There have been no indications, such as forward deployment of airborne troops or Soviet Air Forces strategic assets, that any larger role for Soviet ground forces is likely. This does not rule out the capability of the Soviets, upon request of the SRV, to introduce those types of forces in to the area if the SRV

feels they are necessary for protection. In the future, the largest military presence that the USSR places in the region will remain SOVPACFLT.

Since I have concluded the Soviet naval buildup in Southeast Asia marks the most important effort of the USSR to attain its regional goals, the remaining question is: What form will the challenge assume in the future? It is clear that the position of SOVPACFLT in Southeast Asia is going to be further strengthened qualitatively. Also, the size of SOVPACFLT will probably continue to grow slowly with more modern and capable units being added at aperiodic intervals. Indeed, SOVPACFLT has recently added another aircraft carrier, Kiev class CVHG Novorossiysk, to its order of battle as well as an Ivan Rogov class LPD. This task force, which was recently deployed to the Indian Ocean, entered the Strait of Malacca on 13 February, bound for the Pacific Fleet, [Ref. 46: p. 8] arriving at its new base in late February or early March [Ref. 52: Part I p. 9]. The arrival of this second carrier to the Pacific Fleet has already caused regional governments to view its potential as a "force multiplier" and a "genuine cause for concern" among the ASEAN states [Ref. 56: p. 8].

At the same time a shift in the emphasis of the capabilities of newly constructed ships for the Soviet Navy is on going. Before 1976, new surface units introduced into

the navy were almost exclusively ASW oriented. Now, however, the Soviets are building units such as the Kiev class aircraft carriers, Kirov class nuclear powered cruiser, the Slava class guided missile cruiser, the Sovremennyy class guided missile destroyer, and the Ivan Rogov class amphibious assault transport dock. These units are much more capable than previous Soviet ships. They give the Soviets the ability to mount a bigger challenge to the U.S. and other navies which operate in the Southeast Asian region. Even though only two of these classes have operated in the South China Sea, past patterns of Soviet Pacific Fleet development shows that the other units will be operating in the area in the not too distant future. To cause even greater concern, the Soviets are currently building a new class of larger conventional take off and landing nuclear powered carrier. Using the Kiev class deployment pattern as a guide, it is logical that the second of these units (available early in the next decade) would be transferred to SOVPACFLT [Ref. 49: p. 31].

Finally, it is clear that these new types of ships are coupled with a willingness of the Soviets to deploy their forces more frequently and keep them at sea for longer periods of time. The number of cumulative days that SOVPACFLT units have been at sea in a given year in the Pacific theater (excluding the Indian Ocean) rose from 4,200 in 1968, to 11,800 in 1980, nearly a 300% increase [Ref 22: p. 183].

And, as we have seen (in Table 2.), the use of the ports in the SRV has greatly expanded since 1980, driving the figure even higher in the last three years. By contrast, U.S. ship days in the Pacific declined from 62,400 in 1969 to 17,150 in 1979 [Ref 49: p. 16]. The increase in Soviet operations in the South China Sea indicates a willingness on the part of the Soviets to "show the flag" and counteract U.S. naval deployments in the same region.

Conclusions about the implications of the future Soviet military posture can be reached after the reaction of Southeast Asian and the other nations which have military, diplomatic and economic interests in Southeast Asia are considered.

#### IV. REGIONAL POLITICAL REACTIONS TO SOVIET INFLUENCE BUILDING THROUGH THE USE OF MILITARY PRESENCE AND ASSISTANCE

Since the Soviet Union relies mainly on its military assistance programs and deployed forces in its attempt to build lasting influence in Southeast Asia, a look at regional reactions to that effort is required. First I will look at the ASEAN countries, followed by the countries of Indochina, the PRC, and finally Australia. Each of these countries has an interest in the status of Soviet military forces in the region (or the forces of its allies) because those forces may be used to attempt to influence their actions. If the conclusion is that the reaction of the regional actors is

negative, there is less likelihood that Soviet military assistance and armed forces can help build lasting influence.

#### A. THE ASEAN REACTION

In the view of the ASEAN states, initial Soviet attempts to build influence through the use of military means in Southeast Asia was a 1969 proposal by Leonid Brezhnev for an Asian "collective security" system. Although there were no specifics spelled out in the Brezhnev proposal, it seems clear that the idea behind the proposal was a system which implied the use of the Soviet military to guarantee the peace in Asia. This assumed an exclusion of both the U. S. and the PRC. As a noted authority on the Soviet Union in Asia, B. Sen Gupta has put it,

When Brezhnev put forward, in the most cryptic manner, his idea of a collective security system in Asia, his Asian vision must have been dominated by his perceptions of a United States about to retreat from Southeast Asia and a China that had to be militarily subdued and diplomatically isolated. He put forth his proposal for collective Asian security as a replacement of the U.S. security system. In this, the very concept was the projection of the Soviet Union as the other power, which had a better, more durable, and more acceptable security system to offer the Asian nations [Ref. 58: p. 78].

There was little appeal for this or subsequent Soviet calls for a Soviet led collective security system in Southeast Asia. In November, 1971, ASEAN proposed an alternative to this security system when it called for the

creation of a Zone of Peace Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia. The ZOPFAN would create a region free from the influence of any great powers. At first, the Soviets felt that this ZOPFAN dovetailed neatly into their call for collective security as it called for the elimination of U.S. and (potential) Chinese regional influence. However, in spite of the call for ZOPFAN there were no moves by four of the five the ASEAN states to disassociate themselves from existing security ties to western states through the Manila Pact and the Five Power Defense Arrangements [Ref. 25: p. 56].

In the early 70's the Soviet proposals for collective security received scant notice because relatively little credence was given to the possibility that the USSR would ever become an important power in Southeast Asia. Indeed,

...there was no clear vision of the USSR. It was neither a enemy or a friend, an object of neither high praise or bitter blame. The ideological image of the Soviet Union had vanished; most people in the universities, in the press, in business houses, and in government did not see the USSR as interested in extending the frontiers of world Communism. The Soviet Union was not even perceived as overly interested in Communist victory in South Vietnam....elite groups did not see the Soviet Union as a credible candidate for power and influence in Southeast Asia [Ref. 58: p. 209].

With the North Vietnamese victory in 1975, however, all this changed. U.S. forces were less frequently seen as the guarantee of stability and peace for the nations of Southeast Asia. Thailand asked that U.S. forces be withdrawn and together with the Philippines, asked that the Southeast Asian



Treaty Organization be dismantled. It seemed that the Soviet ambitions in the area had to be taken more seriously as the United States' appeared as an unreliable bulwark against any potential threats to regional security. More importantly, the unification of North and South Vietnam into the SRV in 1976 demonstrated to ASEAN leaders that the USSR had a potential opportunity to move its own power into the region. There was even less of a chance for acceptance of the collective security plan advanced by the Soviets because ASEAN states saw a Soviet supported state as a potential threat.

By late 1976, the Soviets realized that their system held no appeal for the ASEAN states and they assumed a hostile line toward ASEAN, charging that it was little more than a replacement for the now defunct SEATO, and a tool of the U.S. imperialists[Ref. 18: p. 278]. The ASEAN states came to realize that this call for collective security would serve only as a "legitimazation of Soviet power projection into the region" [Ref. 23: p. 538]. This caused the ASEAN states to dismiss the proposal for collective security in spite of frequent attempts by the Soviets to persuade ASEAN diplomats of the merits of the proposal during their visits to the USSR. Since the late 70's, the USSR has not raised the issue of a Soviet led collective security system publicly.

The USSR, however, has not given up on its attempts to use its military assistance or the implied use of its armed

forces to attempt to build regional influence. Instead, it has taken a different avenue. This is shown through its support of the SRV invasion and occupation of Kampuchea, an action that probably would not have been possible (or sustainable) without Soviet support. Although ASEAN condemnation has been less than unanimous since it first took a stand in 1980, the current position seems to have the full support of all ASEAN members. Meeting between 9-10 July, 1984, the ASEAN foreign ministers swiftly arrived at a unanimous position which reaffirmed a 1983 call for phased withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea and self determination for the people. The foreign ministers went on to condemn the Vietnamese harshly for their incursions into Thailand and illegal occupation of Kampuchea. Finally, there was an acceptance of full support for Thailand to protect itself from Vietnamese aggression [Ref. 59: p. 32]. For the present, ASEAN foreign ministers are strongly rejecting this expansionist move by the SRV. This position brought an end to the potentially divisive Indonesian attempts to single handedly approach the Vietnamese through its commander of armed forces General Benny Murdani. At the same time, Indonesian attempts were rejected by Hanoi when it declared that ASEAN could wait until "Vietnam's doomsday for a (negotiated) settlement" [Ref. 60: p. 34].

The USSR has not been able to use military presence anywhere outside of Indochina in order to gain influence.

Of note, the most important peacetime influence building role that the Soviets have for their navy, that of good will visits to other nations, has not been evident in ASEAN countries. There has not been a port call by a Soviet combatant to an ASEAN country in the past 13 years. In fact there have only been two such visits since the end of WW II, the last in 1971 by a destroyer to Singapore [Ref. 58: pp. 546-547] and the other a five day port call to Indonesia by several combatants in 1959. Furthermore, with the exception of Soviet utilization of Keppel Shipyard in Singapore (access terminated in 1980), not even Soviet naval auxiliaries have called in these nations [Ref. 22: pp. 209-214]. While we can not be sure of the number of visits requested by the Soviets, it seems clear that the total absence of such visits indicates that the ASEAN countries want nothing to do with the Soviet Navy.

In spite of general agreement by ASEAN to reject attempts by the Soviet Union to build influence, there has not been universal, direct criticism of the Soviet military assistance to the SRV or the deployment of Soviet Naval units to bases in Vietnam. The picture of the ASEAN response to these moves is complex and deserves a country by country examination simply because there is no overall position.

Due to its recent independence, the position of Brunei can not be adequately examined. However, due to its long

association with the United Kingdom, its strong attachment to Islam, and the enormous per capita wealth which creates a stable society, it can be assumed that it will be opposed to Soviet activities in the region.

#### 1. The Indonesian Reaction

As pointed out earlier, Indonesia had first hand experience in the mid-1960's with Soviet attempts at influence building through military assistance. The Soviet effort was terminated soon after the abortive September 1965 coup. This was not to be the end of Soviet tries at making inroads based on military needs of the USSR. By the 1970's, the USSR began to see the strategic importance of Indonesia as one of the countries that controlled passage through the Strait of Malacca. With the need to have regular access to its growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean, as well as seeing other potential benefits (such as support for its collective security plan etc.) the Soviets maintained a tenuous military assistance program with Indonesia [Ref. 10: p. 426].

As a result of the increasing importance of Indonesia's strategic position, as well as a desire to reinstitute the formerly close military relation between the two countries, Moscow offered a Treaty of Peace and Friendship to Jakarta in 1972. The Indonesians rejected the offer and the USSR commenced an anti-Indonesian press campaign [Ref. 25: p.

61]. Soon however, the Soviets tried another line to show the Indonesians that they might be in need of Soviet protection. Beginning in 1976, the USSR began a concerted effort of playing on Indonesians fears of the PRC and the overseas Chinese population within Indonesia [Ref. 25: p. 61]. This played on longstanding Indonesian anti-Chinese sentiments (where the 2.5% Chinese population is perceived as having been intimately involved in the 1965 problems as well as being seen as have inordinate power for their size) just at the time when other ASEAN states expressed concerns about potential Soviet power moves into Indochina. This Soviet propaganda effort directed Indonesian concern away from the USSR and toward the PRC. This overshadowed what little fear there was in Jakarta over the possibility of any potential Soviet military threat in Southeast Asia by the "Chinese threat".

Events in Indochina in 1978 and 1979 caused even the Indonesians to reevaluate their position vis-a-vis the USSR. The Soviet backed SRV invasion of Kampuchea and the establishment of a permanent, substantial Soviet military presence in the region probably caused enough concern that the Indonesians supported early ASEAN calls for SRV withdrawal from Kampuchea. Deeply rooted Indonesian fears of the PRC (and potentially pro-PRC overseas Chinese in Indonesia) and the possibility that it would become a power in the Kampuchean resistance movement caused the Indonesians to quickly return their focus to the Chinese question.

In fact, as early as 1980, the Indonesians were thinking of redefining the ASEAN position on Kampuchea. As they saw it, having the Vietnamese in Kampuchea was better than having the Chinese there [Ref. 61: p. 152]. Although this position was not accepted by ASEAN, it reinforces the notion that the Indonesians are much more wary of the potential PRC threat than they are of the growing regional military power of Moscow or its client states. This view seems to be bolstered by less than vigorous condemnation of Soviet military action in Afghanistan [Ref. 30: p. 14] and a mild position of "regret" over the Soviet shoot down of KAL-007 when all others were issuing much more strongly worded statements [Ref. 62: p. N1].

Finally, the so called Murdani initiative of early 1984, when the armed forces commander made trips to the SRV and pointed out that the Chinese were the number one enemy, again placed the Indonesians in a situation of seeming unconcern for Soviet-Vietnamese regional military might [Ref. 63: p. 8]. In the final analysis, the Indonesians are not overly concerned with the projection of Soviet power into Southeast Asia because they are much more concerned with the potential PRC threat.

## 2. The Malaysian Reaction

Much of the concern evidenced in Indonesia over the potential threat to Southeast Asia posed by the PRC is also



seen in Malaysia. This has not, however, prevented the Malaysians from taking a unique view of the USSR. With the Soviet call in the early '70's for a collective security plan for Asia, Malaysian statements on the future of a two-tiered neutralization system for the region (where each Superpower would ensure that the others would not become militarily involved in the area and the regional actors would all become neutral) seemed to indicate that the USSR, along with the U.S. and the PRC, could be guarantors of the peace. This of course did not grant acceptance of the Soviet position because it also called for U.S. and PRC participation, but it seemed to permit a potential Soviet involvement.

As was the case with other Southeast Asian countries, the Malaysian attitude toward regional Soviet military presence and assistance changed when the SRV invaded Kampuchea. A hardening of Malaysia's attitude was shown in 1980 when Malaysia proposed that there should be no Soviet (or Chinese) involvement in Indochinese affairs. Malaysia went on to say that the SRV occupation of Kampuchea was possible only with continuing Soviet military and economic assistance [Ref. 61: p. 191].

Further Malaysian criticism was aimed directly at the Soviet military presence early in 1981, when foreign minister Shafie expressed fears that Soviet Navy use of naval facilities in the SRV posed the possibility of increased

Finally, another telling sign of Moscow's real commitment to the North was shown by their meager reaction to the mining of Haiphong harbor. To show solidarity with their socialist brothers, the USSR deployed six surface ships and five submarines to the South China Sea to counter the U.S. force of six carrier battle groups and over 1,000 carrier and land based aircraft. The smallness of the effort was shown when the Soviet naval forces failed to approach closer than 300nm to the U.S. forces [Ref. 12: p. 134].

Thus the North Vietnamese were under no illusions as to the place they played in the global game. After their final victory over the South they showed little inclination to invite further Soviet involvement in the (by then) SRV. They saw that the USSR viewed the war as an "almost ideal arrangement" where they could directly contribute to the war against the United States yet remain an adversary not a combatant [Ref. 13: p. 254]. Following the end of the war, the Vietnamese were able to "resist" Soviet efforts to establish greater military and economic ties for some time [Ref. 14: p. 64]. However, the Vietnamese could only hold out for less than three years. By the end of 1978 they moved much closer to Moscow due to their looming conflict with China, their war in Kampuchea, and their failing economy [Ref. 15: pp. 89-90].

foreign intervention in regional affairs [Ref. 64: p. 01]. Similar sentiments were again expressed concerning Vietnamese statements that they would leave the door open for Soviet military bases. The Malaysians claimed that this was opposed to the concept of the ZOPFAN and could only turn Southeast Asia into a theater for war or nuclear conflict [Ref. 65: p. 05].

This position was given additional weight in March 1983 when, in a lengthy discourse on the current situation in Southeast Asia, the foreign minister detailed the Soviet military buildup in the area claiming that it "stoked Vietnam's ambition which in the end would only serve Soviet designs" [Ref. 66: p. 84]. A final concern was voiced in April 1983 when Soviet deputy foreign minister Mikhail Kapista raised the spectre of Vietnamese subversion in Southeast Asia, endangering the infrastructure of all ASEAN nations. The Malaysian Premier denounced this as a Soviet "excuse to move into the region" [Ref. 28: p. 331].

It seems that this relatively hard line toward the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia and its military assistance to the SRV began to soften by the summer of 1983. By then, the foreign minister stated that the USSR was not a direct threat to the region, but could cause a Chinese countermove [Ref. 42: p. 24]. Thus the age old Malaysian view of the Chinese as the potential begehman seemed to be replacing the Soviets as the foremost potential threat in the minds of the Malaysians. Prime Minister Mahathir stated this view to U.S.

Secretary of State Schultz in July 1984 when he said that Malaysia considered China, not the Soviet Union as the long term threat to peace in Southeast Asia [Ref. 67: p. 2]. A graphic illustration of this change in heart was demonstrated by the announcement that the acting chief of the Malaysian air force would travel to the USSR in September to look into the possibility of purchasing Soviet military helicopters [Ref. 68: p. 11].

Therefore, events surrounding the Vietnamese invasion and occupation and the buildup of Soviet naval forces in the SRV caused the Malaysians to see the Soviets (or their allies) as the principal potential threat to peace in Southeast Asia. However, time has acted in favor of the Soviets, allowing the Malaysians to forget about them and remember the much more deeply seated fear of the Chinese. This is not to say, however, that the Malaysians now welcome Soviet presence in Southeast Asia or its military support of the SRV.

### 3. The Philippine Reaction

The Philippines say less about the Soviet military presence and military assistance to Indochina than other regional actors. This is easily understood as the government of the Philippines has tremendous internal problems which assume a much higher priority than responding to Soviet activities. Several points, however, do bear mentioning.

First, the Republic of the Philippines joined the ASEAN call for a ZOPFAN, indicating a refusal to accept the Soviet attempt to enter into a collective security arrangement with Southeast Asian nations. Furthermore, until 1975 the Philippines was a member of SEATO and still maintains defense links to the U.S. through the Manila Pact and the presence of U.S. forces on bases in the Philippines (bases which are now under Philippine control and sovereignty).

However, following the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and the collapse of South Vietnam, the Philippines, along with Thailand, called for the termination of SEATO, a treaty that called for resistance to the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Also, in 1975 the Philippines established diplomatic relations with the USSR and the (soon to be) SRV. More importantly, the agreement on establishment of diplomatic relations between the Filipinos and the Vietnamese stated that the Filipinos would not allow the U.S. bases in the Philippines to be used for hostile military actions against any other nations in the region (the Vietnamese made the same pledge) [Ref. 58: p. 233]. Thus the government of the Philippines seemed to abandon its anti-Vietnamese and anti-Soviet stance. It should be pointed out that these moves may have been made in part to influence the upcoming talks between the Philippines and the U.S. on the status of U.S. bases in the Philippines (the final outcome of which gave sovereignty of the bases to the Philippines). President

Marcos may have felt that his bargaining position would be stronger if he showed some movement away from 100% reliance on the U.S.

In any event, the U.S. military presence in the Philippines was continued and little was made of the diplomatic offensive of President Marcos toward communist countries. Furthermore, in 1980 Marcos announced that he would fight on the side of the Americans if a global war were ever to break out [Ref. 61: p. 229]. Again, however, this statement should not be viewed as a denunciation of a potential Soviet military threat but rather a statement by Marcos to his American benefactors that he remained a worthy recipient of U.S. military and economic assistance. In fact, in 1983 [Ref. 69: p. P3] Foreign Minister Carlos Romulo categorically stated that the Soviet Union posed no danger to the Philippines. For a variety of reasons the Filipinos are not overly concerned about the Soviet military presence in Southeast or their support for the SRV.

#### 4. The Singaporean Reaction

The reaction of Singapore to Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia has varied widely since the early 1970's. Although Singapore did not accept the Soviet concept of a Soviet controlled collective security plan for the area, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew indicated that Singapore could play a positive role in the regional expansion of the Soviet naval



operations. In a 1971 interview with the Los Angeles Times he said,

It is believed in Singapore that once Moscow develops its naval strength from the eastern Mediterranean into the Indian Ocean, the island city-state becomes a natural choice as a warm water port for the Soviet Indian Ocean fleet and the big Pacific fleet based at Vladivostok [Ref. 58: pp. 243-244].

In fact Singapore granted access to the Soviet Navy as naval auxiliaries began visits in 1970. By 1972 the level of activity increased dramatically including stops of over two weeks for repairs. This activity continued into 1980 with a total of 5,078 ship days spent in Singapore, mostly for repair periods. This provided an economic benefit for Singapore (as outlined in chapter II) and also improved the position of SOVPACFLT since it allowed them to maintain a schedule of repairs which was impossible in the overcrowded repair facilities in the Soviet Far East [Ref. 22: pp. 136-138].

It would appear, however, that the overriding reason for the granting of access was not to help the Soviets in their attempts to build influence in Southeast Asia. Rather, the practical politicians in Singapore saw the economic benefits of the port visits and went ahead with the program. In fact, as early as 1973 Singapore showed it had no desire to allow the Soviets to establish a continual naval patrol in the area. In that year Lee called for a joint U.S., Japanese, Australian and perhaps European naval task force to patrol

Southeast Asian waters to promote the peaceful development of the region and "offset the threat of the growing Soviet Fleet" [Ref. 58: pp. 244-245]. Apparently Singapore felt it could have its cake and eat it too.

As with other states, the Soviet backed SRV invasion further hardened the attitude in Singapore towards Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia. Beginning in 1979, Singapore took the hardest line toward the invasion of any of the ASEAN states [Ref. 70: p. 275] demanding SRV withdrawal from Kampuchea. The following year Singapore terminated Soviet access to its repair facilities at the Keppel shipyard and stopped all port calls by Soviet naval units. The strong stance against Soviet military involvement in Southeast Asia was reinforced in 1981 when the second Deputy Prime Minister, Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, declared that the Soviet Union was eventually going to use force to convert Southeast Asia into a proxy for its global goals [Ref. 71: p. 29]. The attacks against the Soviet Union continue, indicating a consistent Singaporean public position. It appears that for the near term, Singapore will continue to voice its opposition to the expansion of Soviet military power into Southeast Asia as well as its assistance to the SRV.

## 5. The Thai Reaction

Thailand also currently voices very strong opposition to the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia and its military assistance to the SRV. This has not always been the case, however. Prior to 1973 the Thai military regimes had little or no contact with the USSR and fought in South Vietnam against Moscow's socialist brothers, the North Vietnamese. With the fall of the Thai military regime in 1973, the Thais pulled their troops out of South Vietnam and improved their ties with the USSR. The Soviets must have been pleasantly surprised to see this development [Ref. 25: p. 58]. Even the question of the increasing Soviet naval presence in waters near Thailand seemed not to worry the Thai government officials as they stated in 1973 that the USSR should have equal naval access to the searoutes in Southeast Asia [Ref. 58: p. 229]. The seeming high point, from the Soviet point of view, came in 1976 when the Thai government asked the United States to close down its military facilities in Thailand and remove all of its troops by March of that year.

This interlude of apparent acceptance of the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia came to an abrupt end in 1976 when a coup again brought the military to power in

Thailand. The new government announced that U.S. military aid was still welcome and within a matter of weeks was involved in military border clashes with Soviet supported Laotian forces [Ref. 25: p. 59]. Thai opposition to the Soviet military activity in the area became more evident following the SRV invasion of Kampuchea. Now the Thais were faced with another hostile Soviet backed government on its eastern borders as well as Vietnamese forces near the border. Since the invasion, Thailand has been a leader in the ASEAN calls for the removal of SRV forces from Kampuchea and has taken a firm stand that the Soviet military presence in the area is a threat to regional security.

Evidence of this stand was graphically shown in November, 1980. The Thais were very upset that the Soviets used portions of a then SRV deployed SOVPACFLT task force to put military pressure on Thailand for its leading role in the ASEAN sponsored UN resolution calling for the removal of SRV forces from Kampuchea. This task group, four combatants led by CVHG Minsk, conducted operations close to Thailand and reconnoitered Thai gas platforms farther out in the Gulf. This action underlined the presence of Soviet military power in the region, causing the Thai Foreign Ministry to lodge a protest with the Soviet embassy [Ref. 72: p. 559]. [Ref. 73: p. 11].

The Thais continue to protest the Soviet military presence and denounce its SRV alliance. On several occasions SRV military forces have conducted incursions into Thai territory causing combat with Thai troops. The most recent action was in April, 1984 where the Vietnamese used Soviet supplied T-54 tanks in their attack [Ref. 74: p. 10]. The Thais are also critical of the deployment of Soviet naval forces on a seemingly permanent basis to the South China Sea. The secretary general of the Thai National Security Council, Prasong Sunsiri, has denounced the "massive" Soviet military buildup as "Threat to regional security" which should be dealt with by the United States, Japan or China [Ref. 74: p. 11]. In spite of this type of constant criticism from Sunsiri and others the Soviets show no inclination to lessen their support for the SRV or curtail their own military activity in the region. As late as August, 1984 the Soviets conducted aerial reconnaissance of the Gulf of Thailand with two Bear aircraft to monitor U.S. and Thai forces conducting joint operations in exercise Cobra Gold [Ref. 73: p. 11].

It is clear that the present attitude of the Thai government toward the military presence of Soviet forces in Southeast Asia as well as its military assistance to the SRV is one of hostility. While it is possible that the Thai's may come to accept the Soviet Navy in the region, it is unlikely that the Soviet backed SRV occupation of Kampuchea

will be acceptable, especially in light of continued SRV/Thai border clashes.

## 6. Summary

The current overall picture from the ASEAN nations is not too bright for the USSR. Despite the fact that the Indonesians and the Malaysians have (at least temporarily) ceased criticism of the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia, the Soviets still face harsh words from Singapore and Thailand. Additionally, even Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines seem to be firmly behind the latest, ASEAN position opposing the Soviet backed SRV occupation of Kampuchea. Thus the only strong ally of the USSR in the region remains an outcast, with the ASEAN nations mindful that the SRV position in Kampuchea would not be sustainable without Soviet aid.

The ability of the USSR to use its military force and assistance as a tool to attempt influence building outside of Indochina is poor. If anything, the Thai example shows that the ASEAN members are very sensitive in a negative fashion to this type of attempted influence building. This is not to say that the Soviet military presence/assistance influence building tool will always be rejected by these nations. The future acceptance or continued rejection of this influence builder will be assessed in the concluding chapter.



## B. THE INDOCHINESE REACTION

Details of the pre-1978 relationship between the USSR and Vietnam were given in Chapter II. In spite of massive amounts of military aid given to the Vietnamese, the Soviets did not appear to gain any substantial amount of internal influence. Strains in the relationship between the two countries showed that the Soviet Navy was not even allowed to make port calls in Vietnam until just before the Chinese invaded Vietnam. In short, for all of their effort in support of the North Vietnamese war against the South and its American ally, the Soviets gained little influence in the region.

With the departure of the United States from Vietnam and the victory of the North Vietnamese, the Soviets sensed that there would be a future opportunity to gain influence in the SRV. In this vein, they cancelled all pre-1976 debts that the Vietnamese accrued in the war with the United States [Ref. 75: p. 51]. Additionally, as tensions increased along the Sino-Vietnamese borders and the as the Vietnamese were preparing to invade Kampuchea, Moscow provided significant increases in military aid to the SRV. Military transfers amounted to only \$23 million in 1977, increased to \$97 million in 1978 and leaped to \$1.1 billion in 1979, the year

the PRC invaded the SRV. Aid remains fairly close to that level [Ref. 76: p. 114]. Since the 1976 debt cancellation the Vietnamese are paying for at least some of the arms that they receive with cash and barter arrangements of light industrial goods and some agricultural commodities [Ref. 34: p. 14]. The amount of military assistance being sent to the SRV, along with the 1979 Soviet naval show of force during the Chinese invasion, affords some internal influence and has gained access for the Soviet Union to SRV port facilities.

It appears that the increased interaction between the USSR and the SRV is borne of SRV necessity to face its enemy to the north and maintain its military occupation of Kampuchea. The military establishment of the SRV is completely dependent on Soviet largesse and the SRV military leadership is acutely aware of this dependence. While acknowledging the need for the dependence, many question the closeness of the relationship with the USSR [Ref. 77: p. 16]. Beside the fact of necessity, there is another reason why the Vietnamese are able to maintain a working military relationship with the USSR, a deeply rooted respect for power. As Douglas Pike has said,

Those Vietnamese who think about the matter are extremely hard-nosed about the USSR. They regard it as a nation with immense military capability for intruding where it sees an opportunity for advancing what it considers to be progressive

or revolutionary movements. That drive is not seen as ideological, as many in the West would view it, but at the proper use of raw power. The common sense Vietnamese view is simple: if you have power use it. The USSR is admired for its toughness in dealing with other countries, the United States and China particularly. Conversely, China and the United States are held in contempt to the extent that weakness is perceived [Ref. 13: p. 259].

The view of the USSR is schizophrenic, with admiration on the one hand and fear of domination on the other hand. The one thing that all must agree on, however, is that the USSR has supplied the arms necessary for the Vietnamese military to defeat the U.S., occupy Kampuchea, dominate Laos and repulse the Chinese. The list of military equipment that the USSR provided is very extensive and, in amount, reflects the \$1 billion figure given over each of the past five years.

TABLE 3

## MAJOR SOVIET SUPPLIED MILITARY ITEMS IN THE SRV ARMED FORCES

Information for table taken from Ref 78: p. 119

Army	1500 T-34/54/55/62 Main Battle Tanks 300 PT-76 Light Tanks
Navy	2 Petya class Frigates 8 Osa II Missile Attack Patrol Craft 3 Polnocny Amphibious Landing Ships 10 Mi-4 Search and Rescue Helos
Air Force	Numerous MiG-15/17 Fighter Bombers 43 SU-7/20 Fighter Bombers 176 MiG-21 Interceptors 20 AN-2 Transports 50 An-26 Transports 38 Mi-8 Helicopter Gunships 22 Mi-24 Helicopter Gunships 14 Ka-25 ASW helicopters Numerous SA-2/3 Surface-to-air Missiles

While none of this material is of the most modern generation of Soviet equipment, it matches the sophistication of the equipment found in other regional armed forces. It would seem certain that if the Chinese were to obtain more modern equipment, the Soviets would supply equally sophisticated equipment to the SRV. Therefore, there may be complaints on the SRV side of the arms relationship about the quality of the material sent, but its proven track record against the U.S. and the PRC and the fact that it is as modern as any likely adversary probably makes this a weak argument in the eyes of the Soviets and many Vietnamese.

It bears repetition that the most telling illustration of the strength of the influence that this military assistance relationship has had on the SRV is long term Soviet naval utilization of the facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and other ports. The Vietnamese have denied that there are any Soviet bases in the SRV, but the pattern of usage would seem to indicate otherwise, leaving the solution of the question to the semanticists. In spite of these denials of the bases, Hanoi has stated that in the name of self defense, they retain the option of granting permanent bases to the Soviets if they so desire [Ref. 79: p. 34].

In sum, while there may be grumbling on the part of the SRV about the potential for Soviet domination and the quality of assistance offered, the Soviet use of military assistance to attempt internal influence building has been accepted by the Vietnamese. Furthermore, this military assistance allows SOVPACFLT use of SRV ports on a continuing basis. Currently, the Soviets must view their attempts at influence building in Indochina with a degree of satisfaction. Whether the relationship they are building continues over the long term is another thing altogether, and will be addressed in Chapter VI.

Not much mention has been made here of the Soviet role in Laos or the Vietnamese occupied areas of Kampuchea. As pointed out in Chapter III, military assistance and military

advisors are provided directly to both Laos and Kampuchea and Soviet military delegations travel to those countries frequently, some including very high ranking military officials [Ref 80: p. 11]. Soviet attempts at building influence in those countries through military assistance must necessarily take a back seat to the SRV, whose presence in those countries greatly overshadows that of the USSR (There are approximately 40,000 Vietnamese troops in Laos and 200,000 in Kampuchea [Ref. 19: p. 165]).

### C. THE CHINESE REACTION

The reaction of the PRC to the increased Soviet military presence and assistance to the SRV has been very strong. Following the consolidation of North and South Vietnam into the SRV, relations between the PRC and the countries of Indochina were quite good. The PRC established aid programs with Laos, Kampuchea and the SRV. Also, there was no public criticism of the small amounts of military aid that the USSR was sending to the SRV [Ref. 27: p. 312]. With the Vietnamese invasion into a nominally pro-China Kampuchea, however, this cozy situation came to an end and the firm objection to Soviet presence and assistance became the byword of Sino-Soviet relations.



Of course, this reaction was not warranted solely due to the advantages gained by the 1979 Soviet advance into Southeast Asia. The Sino-Soviet split of the 1960's foretold that moves by the Soviets anywhere on the Chinese periphery were bound to draw fire from the PRC. The situation in Indochina, coupled with the two decade old Sino-Soviet split, was reinforced by the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This led to a situation where the Chinese claimed that the cessation of military assistance to the SRV was a prerequisite for improvement in Sino-Soviet relations.

It is ironic, however, that were it not for the PRC invasion of the SRV, the SRV naval bases would be closed to the Soviets. It is also arguable that without the increases in Soviet military assistance the Vietnamese could not have attacked and occupied Kampuchea and the Chinese invasion would never have taken place. As in most international conflicts each side blames the other for the problem. In the final analysis, the responsibility for the current Southeast Asian situation can be placed on the SRV and its Soviet ally. In any event, when the two communist giants tried to reconcile their differences in talks in 1980, the Chinese stated that USSR would have to withdraw its forces from the SRV before talks could go on [Ref. 80: p. 144], clearly rejecting the Soviet use of its military presence and military assistance programs to attempt influence building.

The Chinese continued this attitude through mid-1982 as they rejected Soviet overtures to improve relations. (The Soviets made the overture in the face of Chinese/American difficulties over the question of arms sales to Taiwan). The Chinese tied the rejection of the Soviet feeler to the continued military buildup of the USSR in the Far East and "consistent support for a Vietnamese controlled Indochina " [Ref. 81: p. 10]. As is the case in nearly all international dealings it was not long before the Chinese position would seemingly change, to one more favorable to the Soviet position in Southeast Asia.

Later in 1982 the apparent Chinese rejection of the Brezhnev overtures was softened somewhat as the PRC conveyed to the Soviets their feeling that the Soviet bases in the SRV were not aimed at China but rather were there to counter the U.S. bases in the Philippines. The Chinese concluded by saying that they could accept some Soviet military presence in Vietnam [Ref. 82: p. 14]. Indeed, there seemed to a meaningful toning down of Chinese criticism of the USSR/SRV relationship through late 1983.

Just as they changed their position in late 1982, the Chinese have apparently switched back to the offensive against the USSR in Southeast Asia. In November, the USSR increased the capability of their forces in Vietnam by deploying surface-to-air missile capable TU-61 Badgers to

the SRV. In response to this move, the PRC stepped up its operations along the Sino-Vietnamese border and even sent Hu Yaobang on a highly visible trip to the border area where he urged the Chinese troops to be ready to face the Vietnamese [Ref. 83: p. 46].

To make matters worse, in early April, the Soviets and the Vietnamese conducted a joint amphibious operation in the Gulf of Tonkin. The apparent Chinese response was a renewal of cross border attacks on Vietnamese troops on 28 April. The PRC followed these attacks with a heavily publicized amphibious operation on Hainan Island [Ref. 84: p. 47]. Additionally, the media campaign aimed at the Soviet presence was also resurrected in 1984 when the Chinese declared that the "Vietnamese-Soviet strategic alliance" was being used by the Soviets to "gain a foothold and advance base in its southward strategy" [Ref. 85: p. 24].

The conclusion to be reached from the dynamic Chinese position toward the Soviet presence in Southeast Asia is that it is inseparable from the entirety of Sino-Soviet relations. As long as the Soviets maintain massive numbers of troops along the northern Chinese borders and continue to occupy Afghanistan, there is little chance that the two countries will come to any overall understanding regardless of the situation in Southeast Asia. It is important to see, however, that the deployment of a capable Soviet offensive

military force to Vietnam and continued Soviet support for the armed forces of the SRV reinforces the conflict between Moscow and Beijing. Therefore, Beijing is not ready to accept the Soviet position in Southeast Asia without major concessions in other areas (which are not likely forthcoming), especially since the Soviets continue to strengthen their forces in the SRV.

#### D. THE AUSTRALIAN REACTION

Australian reaction to the Soviet presence in Southeast Asia must be seen in the light of recent Australian attitudes toward the Soviet Union's general military buildup. Australian governments of the mid-1970's tended to be more wary of the USSR than were their American counterparts. Indeed, in 1976, Prime Minister Malcom Fraser claimed that the Soviet Union was seeking to "expand its influence throughout the world in order to achieve Soviet primacy" [Ref. 86: p. 145]. Needless to say such a statement was not to be heard coming from the leaders of the U.S. government who were still pursuing a policy of detente.

In a trend similar to that witnessed in the United States with the election of Ronald Reagan, the Australian position hardened even further as Mr. Fraser publicly warned the Europeans of the "Soviet Bear" and went so far as to say

that war could come with as little as three days warning [Ref. 86: p. 146]. Unlike Mr. Reagan, however, Mr. Fraser's party won only a slim majority in the 1980 elections and later toned down their anti-Soviet stance. By 1981, a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs concluded that there was little likelihood that there would be any direct attack by the Soviets against Australia [Ref. 86: p. 148]. Australian government views of the Soviet threat were further scaled down after the Labor Party elected new leadership in 1983 as Bob Hawke became Prime Minister.

In spite of the lessening of the rhetoric, however, there is still a view in Australia that the rapid buildup of USSR forces in the Pacific Theater creates an increasing Soviet capacity to intervene in third world situations. This capacity (or the capacity to aid allies in intervention) was seen by the Australians as central to the Kampuchean invasion, reinforcing popularly held suspicions of the Soviet Union [Ref. 87: p. 156].

In relation to the situation in Southeast Asia, the Australians have shown a range of opinions concerning the Soviet force buildup and its influence on the region. While some have claimed that it poses a direct threat to Australia and others say that it and others say that it only poses a potential threat, all seem to agree that it is detrimental to the security of Australia [Ref. 88: p. 44]. In this

vein, the deployment of the previously mentioned Badgers and the routine deployments of Kiev class aircraft carriers to the SRV causes the most concern, as each can pose a direct threat to the northern portions of Australia. This concern was highlighted when the second Kiev class unit joined SOVPACFLT earlier this year. It was seen as increasing the capability of the Soviets to develop their own "rapid deployment force", potentially for use in Southeast Asia [Ref. 56: p. 8].

All of this has added significance to Australia because it has formal military ties with Malaysia and Singapore through the Five Power Defense Arrangements; Australia, Malaysia, and Singapore see the Arrangements as important to the security of Southeast Asia. This importance is manifested in the presence of Royal Australian Air Force units at Butterworth Airfield in Malaysia. Early this year the Australian government announced the withdrawal of the forces but a review of the role of the force, and the desire of Malaysia and Singapore to see it remain, caused the Australians to leave it in place. This importance was concretely demonstrated when the Malaysians told the Australian Defense Minister that the force allowed them to more adequately respond to the security dangers posed by Vietnam to the region [Ref. 89: p. 28].

Thus, whether it is manifested through public opinion, government statements or deployment of forces in Malaysia,



the Australians have a fear of potential threat posed by the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia and its large scale military assistance to its Indochinese allies. Furthermore, as Soviet forces continue to grow in the region, the Australian reaction is likely to become more negative.

#### E. CONCLUSION

The USSR has not been the beneficiary of favorable political reaction to its use of military assistance and military presence as influence builders in Southeast Asia. While the Indonesians and the Malaysians may see the Chinese as a greater potential threat, the USSR is still viewed with at least some suspicion. The remainder of ASEAN sees the Soviet Union, to a lesser or greater extent, as a potential threat because of its backing of the SRV. The Indochinese states grudgingly accept the Soviet military presence but would probably be happier if they could get Soviet assistance without giving the USSR access to facilities in their countries. The PRC is flatly opposed to the Soviet presence in the region as well as the military assistance they give to the Indochinese. Finally, the Australians would just as soon see the Soviets depart the area. In sum, the balance sheet for the USSR is not very favorable. It may be argued that they lose more from their military presence/assistance to Indochina vis-a-vis the regional actors than they gain in regional

influence. The final conclusion, however, can only be evaluated after consideration of the gains/losses in the Soviet relationship with the United States.

## V. SOVIET - AMERICAN INTERACTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The central reason for interest in the role of the Soviet military in Southeast Asia is its impact on U.S. interests in the area. U.S. interests are long term, having developed over the past 150 years. Since the middle of the 19th century, the United States has been closely involved in the affairs of Asia. Now our interests and involvement in the region are being challenged by the Soviet Union and an examination of the U.S. response to the challenge must be undertaken to see if we can limit the attempts of the Soviets to build influence through military presence and military assistance.

### A. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The first American interest in Asia was manifested by entrepreneurs who were seeking economic gains in areas unknown to most people in the United States. These adventurers were closely followed by missionaries from all denominations of U.S. churches whose goals were to bring salvation to the "less fortunate souls" of the Orient. As the twin missions of economic gain and provision for the salvation of the Orientals became more widely supported in America, it was not long until we determined that it was our burden to offer

the "benefits" of Western civilization to the all we could in the East.

Thus as the interests of Americans became the interests of the United States. The turn of century saw the U.S. become a colonial power in the Philippines and our close association with the Far East was guaranteed well into the future. As time progressed, the U.S. found few challenges to our power in that region of the world. However, the rising power of Imperial Japan soon challenged the United States colonial seat of Asian power. After a costly confrontation, lasting four years, the interregnum ended with the United States of America being the preeminent military power in Asia as well as wielding significant regional political influence. This position of absolute superiority did not last long. The end of WW II witnessed the beginning of a steady, long term rise of Soviet military power in Asia which would become a factor in Asian affairs, as would the challenge of the newly established communist government of China.

The course of USSR/US interaction in Asia since World War II is generally broken down into four periods [Ref 4: pp. 3-27]. Soviet-American relations during the first period, following the conclusion of the war until early 1949, were largely determined by the results of the Yalta Conference of 1945. At the conference the Allies established certain

"spheres of influence" for the Soviets and the Americans in the area. The Russian regained Sakhalin Island and the Kurile Islands, obtained access to Manchurian railways and ports, and became the predominant influence in the northern half of a divided Korea. The U.S., on the other hand, was to occupy Japan and Okinawa, retain power in the Philippines, and be the major influence in the southern half of Korea. No mention was made of Soviet presence or power outside of Northeast Asia at that or any other wartime conference [Ref 5]. This system remained intact through the 1945-1948 period primarily because the competitive attention of the USSR and the U.S. was focused on problems arising in Europe; the Soviets remained relatively very weak in comparison to the U.S. in Northeast Asia; and Southeast Asia was still the concern of the prewar colonial powers.

In the second period, 1949-1965, events took place between mid-1949 and 1950 which changed the tenor of the regional situation, leading to a deterioration of the status quo and confrontation between the USSR and the U.S. which would persist throughout the period. Five specific events were the catalysts to the increase of tensions in Asia: the final victory of the communists over the nationalists in the Chinese Civil War in 1949; the explosion of an atomic weapon by the Russians in 1949; the beginning of the Korean War in 1950; the demise of European colonial power in Southeast Asia (largely completed by 1959 when Singapore was granted

independence); and the beginning of (indirect) U.S. involvement in Indochina. These events also marked a period of heightened tensions between the U.S. and China (viewed as in part of a monolithic Soviet led anti-American communist bloc) which would last until approximately 1966 and would be concurrent with a corresponding deterioration of U.S./USSR relations. Compounding this deterioration was the beginning of the large scale U.S. military involvement in Vietnam and the British announcement of the gradual termination of their presence east of Suez. However, the U.S. still felt that it was the predominant determinant of events in the area because it retained overwhelming regional military superiority over the Soviet Union.

Relations during the third period, 1966-1978, were marked by a series of ups and downs brought on by events prompted mainly by U.S. and Soviet relations with the Peoples Republic of China. Relations between the two superpowers were very hostile as this period began. However, the deepening Sino-Soviet rift would provide an incentive for Moscow to seek a reduction in tensions with the United States. 1966 marked the beginning of the large scale Soviet troop and arms buildup along the Sino/Soviet border as well as the commencement of a naval buildup of the Soviet Pacific Fleet in response to deteriorating relations between the PRC and Russia. For example, there were 20 ground divisions and 300 tactical aircraft among the Soviet forces in the Far East in



1965, which by 1983 had been increased to approximately 50 divisions of ground troops and 1,200 tactical aircraft, approximately 500 air defense interceptors, and 40 Backfire aircraft. As will be seen in great detail later in the paper, naval forces grew by over 25 percent during the same time [Ref . 6: pp. 51-52].

The Sino/Soviet rift tended to lessen the tension between the USSR and the U.S. as the Soviets attempted to isolate the Chinese. This situation, along with other events, eventually led to the doctrine of detente. However, large scale border clashes between the Soviet Union and the PRC accelerated the buildup of Soviet Forces in the Far Eastern theater, and helped push the PRC closer to the United States so that by 1969 the U.S. chose to play the "China card" to further reduce tensions in the area. Unfortunately, this move added to the Soviet fear of encirclement in the region, prompting the Soviets to continue the policy of military buildup.

Toward the middle of the 1966-78 period, U.S. military power in the region faded rapidly after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. As a case in point, the United States withdrew approximately 25,000 troops and 350 aircraft from Thailand alone after the North Vietnamese victory in 1975 [Ref. 7: p. 271]. Especially pertinent to the Soviets in Southeast Asia was the highly visible worldwide reduction

of U.S. naval strength, drastically reducing the primary and traditional source of U.S. military strength in the region. U.S. naval strength worldwide plummeted from 926 ships in 1969 to a low of 462 ships in 1979. Especially pleasing to the Soviets was the removal of nine aircraft carriers and 99 surface combatants [Ref. 8: p. 72]. These moves, coincident with the Nixon Doctrine (stating that while we would supply arms to our allies, they would have to fight their battles with their own forces), clearly enhanced the Soviet military position in Asia.

In fact, detente died a rather sudden death in 1978/1979 as the Carter administration watched the Soviet backed Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and came to the realization that their policies toward the Russians were inadequate. This ushered in the beginning of the fourth, and current period of U.S.-Soviet relations in Asia. The new U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union, combined with the signing of the peace treaty between the Chinese and the Japanese and formal U.S. recognition of the Peoples Republic of China, led to the latest (and continuing) Soviet military buildup in the area. In effect relations between the U.S. and the USSR returned to "cold war" footing with each extremely wary of the other.

## B. CURRENT U.S. INTERESTS AND GOALS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

This relatively new U.S. - Soviet interaction in Southeast Asia highlights the basic conflict between the regional goals of the USSR and the United States and Soviet attempts to build influence to achieve their goals (at the expense of the U.S.). Having outlined Soviet goals in the area, we now turn to the interests and goals of the U.S. In dealing with the USSR, the broad interests of the United States in Southeast Asia are the same as they are in the rest of the world. As Kegley and Wittkopf state in their book on American foreign policy, American interests are threefold:

1. The United States must reject isolationism permanently and substitute for it an active responsibility for the direction of international affairs.
2. Communism comprises the principal danger in the world, and the United States must use its power to combat the spread of this menace.
3. Because the Soviet Union is the spearhead of the communist challenge, American foreign policy must be dedicated to the containment of Soviet expansionism and influence [Ref. 90: p. 36].

These simple sounding yet important basic interests have shaped American foreign policy in Asia since the end of WW II. They have been concretely demonstrated through the actions of every administration since 1945. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower fought the Korean War in pursuit of these interests. Four Presidents, beginning with Eisenhower,

directly involved the U.S. in South Vietnam, conforming to this basic theme of United States foreign policy. Finally, both Presidents Carter and Regan followed the same basic thrust through their commitments to Thailand in the face of the challenge from the Vietnamese and through a buildup of U.S. conventional weapons, especially naval forces, which are used to counter Soviet force deployment in Southeast Asia.

These perceived interests have shaped the current foreign policy of the United States in Southeast Asia. This foreign policy hinges on five goals. First maintenance of U.S. naval and air forces in the region, necessitating the pursuit of strong allied support for these deployments stressing bilateral ties with governments in the area. Second, maintaining strong ties with ASEAN states. Third, making use of the "China card" (to challenge Soviet power) by building stronger economic and military ties with the PRC. Fourth, stressing the need for the eventual rearmament of Japan's military forces as a part of a burden sharing scheme. And last, placing some stress (albeit rather weak at present) on human rights [Ref. 9].

Our goals and policy obviously put us at odds with Soviet goals in the area. While it is evident that the United States has not achieved all of its goals in Southeast Asia, it is striving to do so. It has remained committed to an active role in the area but has not stopped the spread of

communism nor has it prevented the movement of Soviet forces into the area. The failure to stop the spread of communism and contain the Soviet Union can be directly related to the failure in Vietnam. That allowed Vietnam to hold sway over the remainder of Indochina and eventually provide facilities for SOVPACFLT at Cam Ranh. During the same time, the ability of the United States to counter any Soviet military buildup in the area was drastically impaired because of the rapid decline in U.S. military strength in the area. Primarily, this was because the U.S. Navy (by far the most important component of U.S. regional power) was reduced by such large numbers that it could no longer claim absolute superiority over the growing strength of SOVPACFLT. Also the U.S. was faced with the necessity of committing more naval forces to the Indian Ocean due to problems in Iran. The cumulative effects of this reduction are shown below.

TABLE 4

## Reductions of U.S. Pacific Fleet Force Structure.

Information for table taken from Ref 91: p. 136.

	1965	1975	1982
SSBN	0	10	6
SSN/SS	44	35	47
CVN/CV	13	6	6
CGN/CG	13	15	14
DDG/DD	103	28	37*
FFG/FF	19	33	44*
Mine Warfare	41	9*	9*
Amphibious	73	32	32
Auxiliary	127	60	54

\* Includes Naval Reserve Force

C. THE MILITARY IMPACT OF SOVIET MILITARY GROWTH IN  
SOUTHEAST ASIA ON THE UNITED STATES

The impact upon the United States of Soviet attempts to build influence through military presence and assistance has been mainly in area of regional military balance. As I have already pointed out, the U.S. retains defense arrangements through the Manila Pact with Thailand and the Philippines and that agreement has not been impaired by the Soviet presence. Furthermore, the bilateral relations between the U.S. and other regional nations remain fairly strong. The rapid buildup of Soviet forces in Southeast Asia, however, has changed the regional balance of power picture.



The United States relies mainly on its naval forces to provide regional security in Southeast Asia. The rapid reduction in U.S. naval forces in the region coupled with the rapid increase of SOVPACFLT forces in the area created doubt about the U.S. ability to counter potential Soviet moves. This allows the USSR to use its naval forces more advantageously to attempt to build regional influence because they can now show an overextended U.S. Seventh Fleet no longer has complete mastery of the South China Sea. Unfortunately, this presents a challenge that we are hard pressed to meet. An examination of the forces available to each navy shows that there are areas where the Soviets have significant numerical advantages over the U.S., specifically in submarines. The overall balance between SOVPACFLT and USPACFLT is shown below.

TABLE 5

## SOVPACFLT/USPACFLT Naval Balance in 1982.

Information for this table taken from Refs 94 and 95.

USSR*		U.S.**
24	SSBN	2
90	OTHER SUBS	32
0	CVN	2
0	CV	4
1	CVHG***	0
0	BB	1
0	CGN	5
10	CG	12
10	DDG	15
10	DD	15
10	FFG	16
0	FF****	28
3	CL	0
250	AIRCRAFT*****	750

\* Includes ships in "mothballs".

\*\* Does not include ships in "mothballs" or in the Naval Reserve Forces.

\*\*\* Does not include the newly arrived CVGH.

\*\*\*\* Excludes all ships of 2,000 tons displacement or less.

\*\*\*\*\* Includes only fixed wing combat aircraft.

In short, the U.S. does not have enough naval forces to go around. In fact, Admiral Robert Long, past Commander-in-Chief United States Forces Pacific has said, "naval, air, army, and marine forces in PACOM are thinly stretched trying to cover the Pacific and Indian Oceans and Southeast Asian waters" [Ref. 92: pp. 30-31]. Even more to the point, former CNO Admiral Elmo Zumwalt says,

The U.S. Navy's position has deteriorated dramatically during the last decade, to the point that the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) declared in 1981 that the United States has lost its 'narrow margin of superiority, sliding into a gray area where neither side can be said to be ahead.' I believe that the situation is far worse than that stated by the CNO, because (1) the strategic nuclear relationship is more advantageous to the Soviets at this time than officially acknowledged, (2) the Soviets are expanding their naval capabilities at a rapid pace, and (3) the current efforts to revitalize the (U.S.) Navy are off course [Ref 93: p. 139].

Any final assessment of the ability of SOVPACFLT to defeat USPACFLT in the South China sea is highly scenario dependent. If both fleets were to mass their forces in the region, the U.S. fleet would appear to be much stronger, if we were able to locate and neutralize their submarines rapidly. However, it is unlikely that such an engagement would ever take place. Most of the naval action in a war between the USSR and the U.S. would take place in the North Pacific. Therefore, each side would probably engage the other in the South China Sea with forces already in place.

Assuming the normal composition of Soviet forces in the region as detailed in Table 2 and assuming that the U.S. had the usual single carrier battle group in the South China sea, the results would vary. If the Soviets were able to strike without warning, the U.S. task group would surely be devastated if the Soviets used tactical nuclear weapons, and

would probably be heavily damaged if conventional weapons were used. If the U.S. task group had ample warning time, a conventional attack by the Soviets would do much less harm and in fact the U.S. forces would probably "win" the battle. However, even with ample warning, if they were the first to use tactical nuclear weapons the U.S. forces could be severely damaged.

The point to be made here is that, depending on the scenario, USPACFLT could either win or lose an engagement with SOVPACFLT. The most important fact remains, however, that 15 years ago we could have won any engagement and, if the Soviets are free to choose the scenario, the chances are good that we could "lose" some engagements which would take place today. An in-depth study of the ability of the U.S. fleet to receive ample warning time about an impending Soviet attack is beyond the scope of thesis. In fact, in most cases the USPACFLT would receive warning before an attack took place. However, it is my opinion that there are instances when a surprise attack could take place.

Regardless of the war fighting scenario, the Soviets can more easily use their Navy as a tool to attempt influence building than they could six years ago. As pointed out earlier the shift in the balance of naval forces in the area is clearly in the Soviet's favor. They went from practically nothing in 1978 to a sizeable force in 1983. At the same

time, the U.S. naval force in the area shrunk between 1969-1978 and is only now being rebuilt (but only to 60% of the pre 1969 level). This has brought the nations of Indochina to see the SOVPACFLT units as a credible power and may cause at least the Malaysians and the Indonesians to see it as a more reliable bulwark against potential Chinese aggression.

Furthermore, the Soviet forces in the SRV pose a direct threat to the logistical support infrastructure that the U.S. has in the Philippines, especially the American naval base at Subic Bay. With the introduction of the TU-16 Badger strike aircraft into Vietnam the Soviets have, for the first time, placed our bases at risk by conventional air attack. Prior to the Badger deployments to Cam Ranh, any conventional air attack against these bases would have had to come from the Soviet air bases in the Vladivostok area.

This, of course, would have meant that they would have had to fly through areas strongly defended against such actions by the U.S. Air Force in South Korea and Japan and the Japanese air self defence forces. This would involve approx 156 U.S. fighter aircraft (36 F-4, 72 F-15, and 48 F-16) [Ref 33: p. 10] and 240 Japanese fighter aircraft (130 F-4, 10 F-15 and 100 F-104) [Ref. 96: p. 36] before they even were close to the Philippines. Now however, they face only a total force in the Philippines of 2 U.S. Air Force F-4 and 1F-5E squadrons [Ref. 33: p. 10] and 1 F-8

and 1 F-5A squadron of the Philippine Air Force and no surface-to-air missiles [Ref. 33: p. 98]. This argument, of course, assumes a worst case scenario where U.S. carrier borne aircraft were not put to use. If these aircraft were used, it would normally add two squadrons of F-14 aircraft to the forces available as well as the use of the E-2C airborne early warning platform to the scenario and would make the task of the Badgers more difficult.

The impact on the regional balance by the Badgers alone can easily be seen and marks a tremendous increase over just one year ago. While the threat of the other portions of the Soviet SRV based complement are not so dramatic, they do still pose a significant threat to U.S. naval forces operating in the South China Sea. Surface and airborne ASW assets (although limited in size) are now locally available and an adequate ACW force is easily assembled with the cruise missile firing submarine, the surface combatants, the Badgers and the Bear D reconnaissance aircraft.

These forces also pose a tremendous threat to the use of the sea lines of communications which pass through the South China Sea. These lines of communication are vital to the economy of nations littoral to the South China Sea and relatively important to the economy of Japan, the linchpin of U.S. foreign policy in Northeast Asia. Thus the denial of the South China Sea for shipping would immediately affect



the economy of the entire Pacific basin, and although some compensation could be made for nations outside of the South China Sea by rerouting shipping traffic, the results would still be grave.

Similarly, these units are now in a position to pose a threat to the ability of the United States to have free use of the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca to rapidly resupply forces in the Indian Ocean in time of conflict with stocks on hand at Subic Bay. In fact these large, important, forward based stocks may be destroyed by direct air or sea launched cruise missile attacks. The destruction of the forward based supplies would be devastating to the Seventh Fleet and would also force the U.S. to resupply its naval forces from the Marianas or Hawaii, creating delay in a time critical situation.

In quantitative and qualitative terms, the change in the regional U.S. - Soviet military balance has been greater in the past five years than in any other geographic area. Clearly this has aided in Soviet attempts to use military forces and assistance as influence builders. They can show that the U.S. is relatively much weaker than they were before vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. Additionally, the USSR can point out that it now has forces in the area which could be used if any Southeast Asian nation feels it is in need of protection from its regional neighbors.

This is not to say that the Soviets are on the verge of replacing the United States as the most important power in the region. We have already seen that the USSR is limited in its attraction to the nations of the area in the economic, cultural and diplomatic arenas. In fact, the general disenchantment with the Soviets, combined with the attraction of the United States as a role model have led the ruling elites of the area to support a strong U.S. presence there. Visists to the U.S. by the leaders of Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines in 1982, along with Singaporean and especially Thai denunciations of the Soviet presence in Southeast Asia have all resulted in calls from those leaders for a stronger American security commitment to the defense of its interents in the area [Ref. 97: pp. 18-19].

In spite of these calls for an increased U.S. presence, and the fact that they are diplomatically inept and economically weak, at the present time the Soviets must see their efforts at influence building in Southeast Asia through military power and assistance as being positive. They have rapidly and radically changed the regional military balance of power vis-a-vis the United States to a position where the U.S. could find itself in a losing battle in the event of a military engagement. The United States has seen this change in balance and has taken concrete steps to lessen Soviet gains.

## D. THE U.S. RESPONSE

The U.S. response to the Soviet attempts to build influence through military presence and military assistance to its allies is to strengthen its economic, diplomatic and military posture in the region. Overall the United States, realizing the strategic importance of Asia, is placing more emphasis on the region in relation to our own long term security. As Secretary of State Schultz said in an address before the World Affairs Council in San Francisco on March, 5 1983,

... 2 days of meetings with our chiefs of missions from all of the Asian Pacific area, underlined for me the importance of this vibrant area for the United States and for the World. The dynamism that I saw convinces me that, as important as the region is today, it will only be more important tomorrow. Nothing underscores the direct interest of the United States in this region more than two simple facts. 1. We trade more today with the nations of the Asian Pacific than with any other region on earth. 2. We have fought three wars in the Pacific in the last 40 years. We do not want to fight another, and this is a reason why the United States will continue to maintain a presence there [Ref. 98].

### 1. The Economic and Diplomatic Response

Concrete steps have been taken in Southeast Asia to bolster the American position since the Soviets came so strongly on the scene in 1979. First, the United States

maintains a program of economic assistance with nations in the region to help them in their internal development as well as to ensure friendly relations. In the 1979, the year of the first massive Soviet aid infusions into Indochina, the United States provided \$291 million in direct economic loans and grants to regional governments, the two largest recipients being Indonesia and the Philippines. Another \$241 million was provided to the region via loans from the U.S. sponsored Improt - Export Bank [Ref. 99: pp. 73-82].

U.S. economic interests and business ties to the regions were also strong. In 1979 the ASEAN countries formed an important trading partnership with the U.S. with 18.6% of ASEAN exports destined for America and 16.5% of its imports derived from the U.S. [Ref. 21: p. 24]. American business also had a strong direct investment in ASEAN countries totaling approximately \$3 billion [Ref. 21: p. 60].

The U.S. commitment in the economic aid and business areas continued to grow after the end of the last decade. Both the Carter and Reagan administrations cited the "USSR's new strategic position in Southeast Asia to justify increases economic aid" [Ref. 27: p. 307]. The business relationship with the ASEAN nations also grew to the point that President Reagan has said,

The U.S. has very important economic and security interests in Southeast Asia, particularly the ASEAN countries. ASEAN,

as a group, is our fifth largest trading partner and the site of some \$10 billion in U.S. investments [Ref. 100: p. 34].

The second area where the United States has taken steps to limit the potential for Soviet influence is in the diplomatic arena. Here the U.S. has taken numerous steps to cement our diplomatic dealings with the ASEAN countries. Recently appointed U.S. diplomats are "old Asia" hands who show a good deal of understanding with the nations of Southeast Asia. American political leaders made trips to the region to show that their well being and security is a vital part of the American interest. Finally the United States allowed ASEAN to take the diplomatic lead to bring an end to the SRV invasion and occupation of Kampuchea and placed itself 100% behind that diplomatic effort [Ref. 100: p. 30]. In this vein, Secretary of State Schultz told the foreign ministers of ASEAN, "We (the United States) are fully committed to supporting the common goals in Southeast Asia ....we follow your lead" [Ref. 105: p. J1].

## 2. The Military Assistance and Military Presence Response

The final area that the United States has concentrated on to limit Soviet influence building is military assistance programs and military presence. Returning again to 1979, the United States concluded a total of \$150 million military assistance program (MAP)

grants and loans with ASEAN countries (bringing the 1979 total to \$637 million in direct economic and military grants and loans). Additionally, \$515 million worth of foreign military sales (FMS) agreements were reached with ASEAN countries in 1979. By 1983, MAP increased to \$157 million and FMS to \$725 million, demonstrating increased U.S. concern [Ref. 101: p. 3-51].

Another part of this response by the United States is to seek limited burden sharing with allies and other friendly governments. In fact, a readjustment of burden sharing with the Japanese and to a lesser extent the Chinese is a keystone for the Reagan administration's Asian policy. Frequent calls for the rearming of Japan and calls for transfer of military technology to China come from the President Reagan himself, "The most important contribution Japan can make towards peace and security in Asia is for Japan to provide for its own defence (sic) and share more of the burden of our mutual defence efforts" [Ref. 102: p. 14].

While this policy is certainly important in the context of Japanese self defense and the containment of SOVPACFLT units to the Sea of Japan, it should not be trumpeted as the method to solve our problems in Southeast Asia. The leaders of the states in that region are nearly unanimous in their fear of a renewed Japanese defense buildup which could extend to Southeast Asia. The memories of World War II are



still too fresh for most of them and they would rather see more U.S. involvement than Japanese presence. A very blunt statement (but to the point) was made by President Ferdinand Marcos when he traveled to the United States in September, 1983.

During his visit to the U.S. in mid-September, Marcos told the Washington Post that he had misgivings about the growing military relationship with Japan. Tokyo, he said, still harboured hopes of dominating Asia, first economically and then either politically or militarily. "If Japan is sold any of your arms," Marcos warned, "see that those arms are not used for predatory purposes. I am distrustful of the Japanese" [Ref. 103: p. 19].

Similarly, the Southeast Asians are wary of any attempt by the United States to enhance the military capabilities of the PRC. They feel that this would only lead to the probability of conflict between the PRC and the USSR in Southeast Asia as well as increase PRC support for insurgency movements in the region [Ref. 104: pp. 29-30]. Additionally, there is the age old fear in Southeast Asia of direct military aggression by the PRC. The Chinese seizure of the Paracel Islands in 1974 and perceived Chinese designs on the Spratly's and the Natuna's, shows that this fear is not ungrounded. For its part, the United States must pursue the issue of burden sharing very cautiously, concentrating on items that are defensive in nature for both the Japanese and Chinese and will not be perceived as threat by the Southeast Asians.

Most importantly vis-a-vis the USSR, we have taken steps to maintain our military strength in Southeast Asia. This is the most important tool we have to limit the future impact of the Soviet naval build up in Southeast Asia. To quote from James A. Kelly, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense,

A strong and visible United States presence continues to be essential throughout the region to prevent intimidation of our friends and allies and to assure those nations who share our values of interests that America's commitment to the region remains firm. The renewed commitment of the American Government and the American people to do what it takes to ensure our defense has started to make a difference in the Pacific [Ref. 106: p. 21].

More precisely, the United States has to remain committed to a regional defense that relies primarily on naval power. It is not only Soviet admirals who recognize the inherent advantages of naval power as a component of foreign policy; the same feelings are true in a wide spectrum of the U.S. academic world in regard to the Soviet challenge in this regional setting. Michael Nacht has argued,

A related characteristic of American regional security should be to increase reliance on naval power, especially sealift capability, carrier-based aircraft, and the use of conventionally armed sea-launched cruise missiles. Naval power is flexible. It can be put in place and removed relatively easily from a potential conflict situation. If it is sensibly deployed, it can be insulated from

large numbers of politically vulnerable basing arrangements. American naval power can project a military presence for political purposes of introduce potent armed force into a conflict without relying on the cooperation of any other sovereign state [Ref. 107: p. 262].

And even Selig Harrison, a critic of U.S. policy in Asia has agreed that in the U.S./USSR competition in Asia, the power of the Seventh Fleet is the main tool for American containment of Soviet expansionism [Ref. 100: p. 379].

Steps have been taken to bolster this main instrument of response to Soviet influence building. In 1978 Secretary of Defense Harold Brown dropped the so called "swing strategy" which would have denuded Southeast Asia of U.S. naval power in the event of a war in Europe. Furthermore, commitments were made to strengthen the U.S. Seventh Fleet [Ref. 27: p. 307]. In fact this had been done under the Reagan administration. Major defense budget increases have provided for a larger supply of ammunition for Seventh Fleet units and a commitment has been made to increase the size of the overall Navy to 600 ships, including 15 carrier battle groups. This would make one more available for the Pacific. Additionally the Navy's ship building program is replacing older less capable platforms with newer, more capable ones. For example, the continued construction of nuclear powered aircraft carriers has allowed the replacement of the WWII vintage USS Coral Sea with the much more capable USS Carl

Vinson in the USPACFLT inventory. Admiral Sylvester R. Foley Jr., Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet, has said that all of these changes are going to make Seventh Fleet more capable of dealing with the Soviet presence in the South China Sea [Ref. 109: p. 28].

We have seen that the increased Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia changed the balance of power in the area between the United States and the Soviet Union. This has given the Soviets a better capability to attempt influence building in the region. We have also seen that the United States has taken economic, diplomatic and military steps to respond to this challenge. Will the challenge be met? The answer can only come after measuring the U.S. response in combination with the response of the regional actors and examining the likelihood that the Soviet presence in the SRV will be secure in the future. The current and future success of Soviet influence building attempts are assessed below.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### A. CONCLUSIONS

I have viewed the Soviet presence in Southeast in light of their desire to build lasting regional influence. Several conclusions about that presence and the ability of the Soviets to attain their goals in the region can be made.

First, the role of the Soviet military in Southeast Asia is to build influence and help the USSR attain its foreign policy goals in the area.

Second, Soviet non-military means of influence building clearly play a secondary role to the tool of military assistance and military presence. This has led the Soviets to extend massive amounts of military aid to Indochina as well as maintain a large naval presence in the South China Sea, dependent upon bases in Vietnam. The Soviet Navy will remain the most important facet of the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia and it will be improved qualitatively and may increase slightly in size.

Third, outside of Indochina the negative reaction to the Soviet military assistance programs and deployment of the Soviet Navy is greater than any positive reaction. Whether

they fear the USSR directly or its Indochinese allies, all countries which have interests in the region are at least suspicious of Soviet actions and most are openly critical.

Fourth, because of conclusions two and three, it is unlikely that the USSR will gain any lasting regional influence outside of Indochina. Other than its military prowess, the Soviets have nothing to offer most of the nations of Southeast Asia, and that very same military prowess worries them.

Fifth, it appears that the long term Soviet position in the SRV is secure since the current relationship between the USSR and the SRV will last well into the future. Indeed, two of the foremost authorities on the Soviet position in Vietnam, Douglas Pike [Ref. 13: p. 264] and Sheldon Simon [Ref. 27: p. 313] have written that there is little reason for the relationship to change much, given the SRV/PRC dispute, the poor state of the SRV economy, and the strategic benefits for the Soviets. In spite of the financial costs to the Soviets and the feeling of the Vietnamese that the USSR is too visible in the SRV, the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs for both sides.

Sixth, in spite of the overall inability to gain lasting influence outside of Indochina, the Soviets have at least partially achieved their foreign policy goals in the region.



Viewing these goals one sees successes and failures.

1. Containment of the PRC: Soviet success achieved through military assistance to Indochina and the forward basing of its Navy in the SRV. The Soviets have strengthened their position vis-a-vis the PRC. Soviet forces are now in place to either attack the PRC if the need arises or to prevent any PRC thrusts into Indochina.

2. Counter U.S. influence: Soviet success achieved through a definite change in the U.S./Soviet balance of power within the region. Over the past five years the Soviets have built a naval force capable of significant damage to U.S. 7th Fleet units operating in the South China Sea as well as U.S. facilities at Clark and Subic. The Soviets have, however, failed to replace the U.S. as the most desirable guarantor of the peace for the non-Indochinese nations of Southeast Asia.

3. Keep ASEAN from a pro-Western orientation: Soviet failure to achieve this goal is highlighted by the continued U.S. military presence in the Philippines, the continuance of the Manila pact, the ongoing U.S. bilateral military contacts with all members of ASEAN, and the vigorous health of the Five Power Defense Arrangements. Additionally, the economic ties of ASEAN continue to be focused on the United States and Japan.

4. Support of Soviet regional allies: Soviet success demonstrated through aid to Indochina and assistance to the SRV during the invasion and occupation of Kampuchea and the PRC invasion of Vietnam.

Overall the balance sheet for the USSR in Southeast Asia has its pluses and minuses. The Soviets, however, must view their foothold in Indochina in a favorable light. They are now able to directly challenge the U.S. military in Southeast Asia and they have a direct "line of fire" to southern China. Also they can hope their position vis-a-vis ASEAN might change in the long run as members of ASEAN who fear the PRC more than the USSR may come to feel that their best protection from the Chinese threat is Soviet power. None of this was true before 1979.

In the final analysis, all countries with interests in Southeast Asian are looking at a Soviet presence which may last well into the future. Unless another country can be found to replace the Soviets as the benefactor of the SRV (which is unlikely for a variety of reasons) there are long term implications for the United States.

#### B. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

The ability of the USSR to at least partially attain their goals in Southeast Asia through military assistance to Indochina and deployment of naval forces to forward bases in the SRV has three main implications for the United States.

First, the U.S. must remain active politically and economically in the area. Our bilateral ties to the nations of Southeast Asia must remain strong and any potential problems rectified promptly. At the same time we should continue to support the Southeast Asians' attempts deal with regional political problems under the auspices of ASEAN. Whether or not we view the Association as the solution for long term problems, there is no doubt that support for the organization is better than seeing its demise. This is especially true in dealing with the problem of Soviet support for the SRV occupation of Kampuchea. This **event** has strengthened ASEAN which has taken a strong stand against Soviet support SRV aggression. These steps will continue to show that the Southeast Asians have nothing to gain economically or politically from close association with the USSR.

Secondly, in our attempts to deal with the Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia we must not be too willing to present a strengthened Japan or PRC as a counter to the USSR. As pointed out earlier the nations of the region would not be happy to see an increase in the Japanese or Chinese ability to project power into the area. Therefore our pressure on the Japanese to increase their military spending and our aid to the Chinese military must be strictly limited to defensive capabilities such as air defense and anti-submarine warfare.

Finally, we must continue to improve our military ability to meet the Soviet regional challenge. This can be done by enhancing the defenses of Clark and Subic (introduction of I-HAWK surface-to-air missiles, and replacement of the current U.S. aircraft at Clark with F-15 Eagles) and by making sure the Seventh Fleet is suitably equipped to deal with the naval threat.

In order to insure that U.S. naval force can be used to the appropriate manner to limit the impact of the SOVPACFLT naval buildup on U.S. regional policy, there are specific items which must be redressed within the USPACFLT structure regardless of the rest of U.S. Asian policy. This is true because if all other policy fails to allow the U.S. to achieve the goals outlined earlier in the paper, the U.S. naval forces in the area are our best defense against any Soviet aggression. As noted in the Gorshkov statement earlier, naval forces can be brought to bear with out the permission of foreign governments unlike ground and air forces stationed abroad, and in peace time they are the least intrusive type of U.S. military force.

It is crystal clear that we must not let the Soviet naval buildup in Southeast Asia limit our options in the area. We must insure that our naval forces retain superiority over their Soviet counterparts. For each new carrier that is added to SOVPACFLT, we must strengthen our

fleet. This should be done by the addition of another battle group to our surface fleet and the placement of Harpoon and Tomahawk cruise missiles on all capable units. Further, we must carefully study the future structure of the USPACFLT, to insure the best mix of platforms to specifically counter the SOVPACFLT threat.

Also, we must come to grips with the problems facing our bases in the Philippines. It is not certain that they will be allowed to remain in the future, regardless of the political outcome when Marcos is gone. In the rather unlikely event that we are told to leave, other plans must be waiting to be put into action. Whether this would entail moving the forces to Palau, Guam, Singapore or Japan is beyond the discussion of this paper. However, the ability to rapidly project U.S. naval power into Southeast Asia must be maintained.

Finally, we must be aware that even if the Soviets are denied basing rights in the SRV in the future, they are moving in the direction of attaining the ability to project and sustain naval power into the region without the use of those bases. The structure of SOVPACFLT is changing to allow it to rely on its own "rapid deployment force" in the not too distant future. While this force is currently limited some capability does exist.

The most recent and graphic indicator that SOVPACFLT is moving in this direction as it applies to Southeast Asia was the joint USSR/SRV amphibious warfare exercise conducted in April of this year south of Haiphong. In the exercise, Kiev class CVHG Minsk and an Ivan Rogov class LPD conducted operations which placed at least 500 Soviet Naval Infantrymen ashore along SRV beaches [Ref. 50: p. 26]. This exercise, confirmed by the SRV, [Ref. 51: p. 8A] is significant in that it is the first instance of a Soviet carrier participating in amphibious operations outside of the USSR, demonstrating further steps by the Soviets at power projection.

The operation followed by three years Zapad-81, a combined fleet exercise held in the Baltic in the fall of 1981 which demonstrated the ability of the Soviet Fleet to mass amphibious units from all fleets into a combined exercise moving 5,000 - 6,000 men and 200 medium tanks for a landing. This exercise demonstrates the ability to conduct a similar operation elsewhere. And, as time goes by and more carriers are added to the Pacific Fleet along with more amphibious craft, a large scale operation such as Zapad-81 could be conducted in Southeast Asia [Ref. 54: pp. 109-119]. Thus in my opinion it is easy to see why Norman Friedman has said, "The Soviet Fleet is in transition from a defensive or near defensive role in the coastal and



'blue-belt' zones to a probable overseas intervention role"  
[Ref. 47: p. 156].

The problems inherent in the U.S./USSR interaction in Southeast Asia are quite complex. However, if the United States continues to place emphasis on the regional containment of the Soviet Union and reiterates that the area is extremely important to our strategic security needs, it is likely that American influence in the region will continue to be predominant. This will make sure that the role of the Soviet military never allows the USSR to fully realize its regional foreign policy goals. And, while limited burden sharing with other states in the region can lessen the impact on U.S. citizens, we need to remember that we are the only people with an absolutely overriding interest in our long term security in the region!

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